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Quarterly Series

FIFTIETH VOLUME

OF ADORATION IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

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OF ADORATION IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

BY

JOHN EUSEBIUS NIEREMBERG

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

(OLD ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

WITH A PREFACE BY

PETER GALLWEY

OF THE SAME SOCIETY

A NEW EDITION

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PREFACE.

THIS little volume is a reprint of an old translation published in England in the year 1673. The language will therefore be found antiquated, and the sentences harsh and sometimes obscure. Still, those who read in order to find a little spiritual food for their souls will, I think, be glad to have this old translation brought to light again and put within their reach. The author, Father Nieremberg, was a thoughtful and a holy man. He was one of those who, imitating their Divine Master, first do and then teach; therefore he speaks with authority and power, and his book abounds with short and pregnant sentences, which will remain in the memory and will repay study. This volume is one of many valuable works which our forefathers, in spite of the difficulties of the days of persecution, found time to write and means to publish. Of these fruits of their zealous industry many are lost to us. Several very good books which were in the hands of Catholics in this country a hundred years ago are now only to be found in a few privileged libraries. Is not this loss to be regretted? A great fight is made in our

days to prevent proprietors from enclosing commons of which the people have for a long time had the enjoyment. Ought we not also to be jealous that no good book once added to the common inheritance of our Catholic population be now forfeited?

The Gospel tells us that the duty of the learned scribe in our Lord's Kingdom is to bring forth from the treasure-house old things and new. Here is a good rule for our guidance. We sometimes want books new either in matter or in form to suit some special requirement of our days; at other times we want new editions of old classic works which are treasures suited for every age. The great facility we enioy of procuring books has tended to diminish that deep reverence for a good book which was felt in olden times, when the well-worn volume was a precious heirloom in the family. Seeing around us, as we do, such a profusion of volumes that are worthless and worse than worthless, we naturally lose much of our veneration for books, and forget their sacred character in the Christian Church. Must we not, then, make an effort to bring back the good thoughts of old times, and awaken within ourselves in this age of corrupt literature a just sense of the character, the value, and the power of a good book?

A good book is, first of all, a faithful friend, that will give us counsel without cowardice or flattery on the one hand, and without any personal

bitterness on the other. Beyond this a good book is one of the best Missionaries of Holy Church. It can reach to places where priests cannot penetrate. A stern hater of Popery, who would not for any consideration hold conversation with a Catholic Priest, will oftentimes without any difficulty take into his private room a tempting volume of Catholic truth and read it by his fireside. Add to this that when the zealous Priest dies and is buried the book lives on still, fresh and youthful, to continue its apostleship and to instruct many unto justice. May I not, then, say very safely that he who spends a little money in the effort to print and propagate good books is giving alms in a very excellent way, and will be entitled to the glorious hundred-fold promised to alms-giving? For an alms given in this way, first of all, reaches beyond the body and benefits the soul; secondly, it is not a dole distributed to the needy of one hamlet or one town, but it is a bounty that gladdens the people of many lands, and which will continue to work a wide-spread good, long after the time when death hushes the tongue and paralyzes the hand of him who gave the alms, thus earning for him even after his working-day is over more and more treasures for eternity.

One has been lately called away from the midst of us who spent his energies for many years in an effort to increase our stock of Catholic literature in this country. I remember saying to him on one occasion, when he was feeling the irksome-

ness of the struggle against the difficulties which always attach to a great enterprise, that he enjoyed at least this consolation—that the bread he earned for his family by so holy a traffic was all blessed. For, after the sacred work of the Priesthood, what calling is there more profitable to souls than that of a hard-working publisher of good books? I cannot help thinking that if men reflected more on the wonderful promises which our Lord has made in favour of works of mercy, and how excellent a work of mercy it is to spread good books, we should not long be left, as now we are, in want of capital to maintain in this country a literature worthy of the Church and adequate to the wants of our nation. We cannot help seeing how great a thirst for literature prevails around us, and this thirst is still to grow. We know, at the same time, that it would be as easy to secure able writers for the cause of truth as for the spread of immorality, if we had the means of giving to talent the wages it deserves. Now the capital required thus to secure the services of the literary men whose writings command attention would be amply supplied, if one-half the money which has been lost to Catholic families by the failure of hotels and banks and railway companies, had been invested in a well-considered scheme for propagating a wholesome literature. A good Catholic has to combine the business of this world with the interests of eternity; *this* is to be done, and *that* is not to be omitted. But are we to

believe it an impossibility to serve the cause of God, of His Church, and of innumerable perishing souls by spreading good books through the world, and, at the same time, to earn by so doing a sufficient share of our daily bread? Surely no such impossibility is inculcated in that saying of our Blessed Lord, "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you!"

Father John Eusebius Nieremberg, the author of the following treatise on Adoration in Spirit and Truth, is more known at present in this country for his book on the difference between the Temporal and Eternal. He was of a German family, but was born in Madrid in 1590, and educated in Spain. Hence his numerous spiritual treatises and biographies of holy men are written in the Spanish language. He entered the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Salamanca in the year 1614, and dying in Madrid on the seventh of April, 1658, went to receive the reward of a fervent, austere, and very laborious life.

PETER GALLWEY, S. J.

Manresa House, Whit Sunday, 1871.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
1.	The Deceitfulness of a Secular Life	1
2.	Of the Truth of the Spirit	7
3.	Of Purity of Spirit	11
4.	How Truth is made manifest by Faith; and of the fruit and practice of this virtue	17
5.	Of the hope of Pardon and zeal of Penance	22
6.	The model of a Sinner is set before our eyes	26
7.	The second part of the Parable: and how we must use creatures	33
8.	The affections of a true Penitent	39
9.	Of the ardent desire of those that desire God	47
10.	Of contemning and relinquishing the World	50
11.	How Peace is to be obtained	53
12.	Of the excellency of one that is in the state of grace	59
13.	How Penances and Corporal Afflictions help us.	73
14.	That too much love of our Flesh hinders the Spirit	78
15.	Of the loss of Temporal things	81
16.	How profitable Temptations are.	85
17.	That we must fear God and hope in Him	88
18.	That we cannot but suffer something, and of the good of Patience	93
19.	Of Diligence in Prayer	98
20.	That we must not intermit our practice of Prayer	105
21.	How efficacious the Grace and Favours of Christ are	109

CHAP.		PAGE
22.	How devoutly we ought to be affected towards the most Blessed Virgin Mary	121
23.	That we must imitate Christ, and of the Sorrow and suffering of His Most Blessed Heart	133
24.	How far we are to follow Christ	141
25.	That Necessities and Afflictions sent by God are to be borne patiently	150
26.	How Purity of Body helps the Spirit	155
27.	That our practice of Mortification must be continual	159
28.	Of the sufficiency and good of Poverty	165
29.	That Patience is necessary in all occasions	172
30.	What a great good it is to be subject to another	177
31.	How great harm proceeds from daily and light defects	183
32.	Of Exactness in small things	193
33.	That Self-praise is to be avoided	198
34.	Of the baseness of man	202
35.	What things ought to humble man, and that he can have nothing besides God alone	209
36.	How much we owe to the Grace of God and Christ	211
37.	That man must not only esteem himself nothing, but also a great Sinner	220
38.	What it is to style oneself nothing and a great sinner	225
39.	That God's Glory is always to be sought	228
40.	How careful we must be to do our Actions well	236
41.	That we must shake off all Negligence	240
42.	How incommodious a thing Sleep is	246
43.	That we must rise fervorously to our Morning Prayer	254
44.	That our Daily Fervour must be retained	260
45.	Of maintaining our Fervour	265
46.	How constant one ought to be in the practice of Good Works	269

CHAP.		PAGE
47.	How solicitous we must be to increase Grace	274
48.	How God is to be praised	280
49.	How great a dignity it is to offer the Sacrifice of Christ	285
50.	That God is to be desired and received with longing in the Eucharist	293
51.	That in time of refection we must not be more indulgent to our Bodies than necessity requires	302
52.	That one must take account of his proceedings by a frequent examen of himself	310
53.	How we must be affected towards others	316
54.	How ungrateful we are to God	321
55.	That God's Benefits are without number	326
56.	That God's Love in our Redemption appears infinite	331
57.	How deservedly God is to be loved, and chiefly for Himself	337
58.	That we are not able to satisfy the Goodness of God	343
59.	How great benefit of Glory we hope for	346
60.	Of suffering Death	354
61.	That Man must give himself to God for His Benefits	360
62.	That God alone is to be loved	363
63.	That Self-love must be rooted out	367
64.	How we are to love our Neighbour	378
65.	That nothing is to be coveted but what God willeth	380
66.	That we must give no ear to our own Will.	385
67.	That we must continually be mindful of God	392
68.	That the Incomprehensible Goodness of God is to be loved	397
69.	Of the Superessential Light of the Most Blessed Trinity	403

CHAPTER I.

The deceitfulness of a secular life.

THE proceedings of men in this life's intercourse are a continual piece of forgery, as void of credit as full of imposture. Be not too zealous of death in a mistake of life, for the Holy Ghost hates dissimulation in matter of discipline. An imposture is so much more pernicious by how much the affair in which it is used is of greater concern and consequence. Men deem nothing dearer than life; how then can they endure to be deluded in it? how can they brook forgery in matters of spirit and worship of God, which are infinitely to be prized above life itself? An imposture concerning life is the worst of evils. It is too dangerous and formidable to be seduced in a thing of all others the most important and precious. Men suffer not willingly their eyes to be cheated; and how ill do they manage their business, if they suffer their minds? They fret and chafe if they be cozened in precious stones, and how much more ought they concerning themselves? How careful and vigilant are those that traffic in gems lest a counterfeit be put into their hands instead of a true one: no man will buy a jewel unless the seller give both oath and surety that it is not adulterous. This is the madness of men; they are content to set a false rate upon their life, though not upon a stone; they love not to be

deceived in their eyesight, but can digest a greater fallacy in their mind, in their life, yea, and in their heaven.

We take it very ill to be cheated by another, though but in small trifles, and we willingly cheat ourselves even in the price of ourselves. We love neither to hear nor tell a lie, and yet we make both ourselves and our life a continual lie. Oh, miserable! who are both the deceived and deceivers of ourselves; and we bear this two-fold misery, which men so much abhor, with patience, and we tolerate this double infamy in a business of such consequence, whereas we should brook neither in a trivial one. If thou judge it a heinous crime to deceive thy friend, and hold it the greatest of wrongs to be deceived by thy friend, what ground or pretence in the world canst thou have to cozen thyself or be cozened by thyself, who shouldst be dearer and faithfuller to thyself than any friend whatsoever. But we willingly entitle our losses through our own default, (which, nevertheless, are the heaviest and in a double kind) with the fair name of patience, and animate ourselves to our own destruction, by not only holding ourselves unworthy of blame, but worthy of congratulation. The covetous man would take it ill if one should cozen him in the fading goods of fortune—he would deem it an intolerable injury if one should stuff his coffers and bags with dirt and rubbish in lieu of gold or silver; and why do we not only endure, but even affect to be cozened by ourselves in the goods of virtue and grace, nor grieve that our life is soiled with the stains of vices and defects, or that our virtue is hypocritical, our charity but forged, our mortification superficial, our humility counterfeit.

A main reason of this endamagement is, because

we do not pursue, or rather thoroughly persecute, self-love lurking in us, and put not this domestic enemy to the sword. It is no charity to save the life of an enemy to the prejudice or endangering of our own, by giving ear to his pernicious counsels. We hearken to our appetites as to so many oracles, although they utter nothing but lies. He that lends his ears to soothing flatterers must needs give credit to many things that are false, and he that attends to the fawning charms of self-love shall ever and anon be deceived.

Tell me, O my soul, if a court or senate of wise and conscientious men should all with joint consent determine a cause, and the malefactor alone, pleading nevertheless guilty and convinced by witnesses, one as foolishly fond as desperately wicked, should stand out against the verdict of the whole court as unjust and partial, wouldst thou believe this one wretch rather than so many wise and upright senators? Why then dost thou follow the toys and fancies of self-love and its brutish appetites? how darest thou oppose its verdict alone to that of God, of His Angels, of the Doctors of the Church, of ancient philosophers, of reason itself, nay, even of thy own conscience, all these condemning for naughty what it approves for good, yea, condemning its very dictamens and desires. Persuade thyself that that is false which God holds not for true, which the Angels disapprove, which the Doctors impugn, philosophers refute, reason disallows, nor squares with conscience. All these find this self-love, this crafty fox full of wiles, guilty of forgery. We are full of deceit because full of self-love; and so much the more perniciously full by how much it is not only a domestic cheat, but so linked to us, yea, so ingrafted in us, that it never

leaves us, nor gives us the least respite from error. Hence not only custom but even prescription in cozenage hath so hardened us, that what is done viciously, we maintain many times as done very prudently, yea, and according to Gospel; and seek to sanctify by the doctrine of Christ what is clearly repugnant to reason. The mist of ignorance which man walks in renders him sufficiently miserable, he needs not be misled with forgery: yet ignorance is but a petty and inconsiderable misery, its darkness being easily dispelled as soon as the light of instruction shines; but the night of error is so wilfully and pertinaciously blind that it is incapable of being illuminated with any precepts. Oh, it were heartily to be wished we were only ignorant, and not seduced also!

This folly and imposture of worldlings reigns in a manner among all sorts and conditions of them. Let them account themselves never so wise, let them be the prime Doctors and Professors of Universities, they are idiots and ill-maximed, and unworthy of such titles, unless they be good and virtuous. Pick out any one of these, such as all the world holds for an oracle of knowledge, if thou shouldst but once see this man void his curious cupboards and cabinets of jewels and vessels of gold, and throw away pearls and precious stones, to fill them up with dirt and dung, couldst thou persuade thyself that this were a wise man, who so prizeth the latter and misprizeth the former? And how then shall he be accounted wise, who not once but always is stuffing his heart with aspirements to honours, with desires of riches and pleasures, and contemns the love of God, the treasures of Divine grace, the merits of Christ, yea, God Himself? All which incomparably more surpass worldly honours,

treasures, pleasures, than gold doth dirt, as much to wit, as God the Creator surmounts His creature. What imports it if thou sayest, that this proceeds not from his ignorance in undervaluing things, but that this man knew well enough the difference betwixt spiritual things and temporal, a thing which nobody can doubt of though his proceedings be contrary? What, I say, will this avail? for neither will he be excused from madness who should say that he knows well enough the value of gold above other things, and how base dirt is in comparison of it; yet nevertheless keeps dirt, courts it, embraces it, kisses it, yea, and refuseth no danger nor labour in search of it; but if gold be tendered him he throws it away and deigns it not so much as a look. Certainly this hidden madness and visible darkness is far more to be admired; and thou durst not call such a one a wise man, or well in his wits, lest thou should be hooted at by all, having lost thine own. How much more will he expose himself to the censure both of laughter and madness, who professing that the spiritual treasures of grace are much to be preferred before all the goods of this world, covets nevertheless the latter and rejects the former. Could he be accounted a learned man, or sound in judgment, or a good Christian, who should cast the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's holy Body out of a golden ciborium consecrated to Its conservation, and place there instead of It a piece of clay? And how deserves he the name of a wise man who expels the Divinity Itself out of his soul, where It took complaisance to reside as in Its tabernacle, and sets up in Its place not dung but more filthy vices and sordid desires, as the idols of his licentious devotions? Therefore we must conclude that there is no wisdom, no truth, to be found in a worldly

life. The dreadfulest instruments of revenge which Christ shall make use of to punish the senses in the Day of Judgment, shall not be the conflict of confounded elements, nor the fall of the stars, nor the eclipse of the sun, nor the conflagration of the world, nor the frightful voice of the Archangel, nor that shrill-sounding trumpet of God, nor the countenance of the angry Judge, but truth alone: Truth, I say, which shall then be rendered illustrious to all, though now as it is veiled with our naughty desires we contemn it.

But although truth be certainly found in a spiritual life, yet not altogether refined from the dregs of forgery, both by reason of the subtlety and soothings of self-love (for soothing and flattery everywhere corrupts and sophisticates truth), as also the wiles and malice of the devil, who labours by all means to destroy created truth since he cannot the increated. Therefore Christ our Saviour recommends to us as the glory of Evangelical perfection, that we adore God in spirit and truth. The true God ought not to be worshipped with a false life. The Only-Begotten Son of God is Truth, and he that will be the son of God must love truth and possess himself of it. Wherefore whosoever evading the precipices of the flesh, treads now the plain paths of spirit, let him not hold himself altogether out of danger unless he walk the roadway of truth. And to the end thou mayest follow this more securely, take these admonitions which will teach thee to adore God, and serve Him unfeignedly in uprightness of heart, and make thee understand what truth speaks, lest some deceit mislead thy spirit: but rather doing truth in charity we may increase in Christ by all our proceedings.

CHAPTER II.

Of the truth of the spirit.

Do not think that thy life will we rendered any whit more unpleasant and tetrical by the fellowship of truth: it is a mere aspersion to say that truth is bitter and unsavoury. A false imputed nickname must not make us out of conceit with a thing in itself most delicious. Do not frame this discourse: If the very outward name of truth be so bitter, what may we judge of its interior relish: if another's discourse concerning it be noisome, what will our only study and practice of it be: if it sound so harshly to our heart, to our conscience, to our whole life? Make not, I say, such illations; for it is not the fault of honey if it taste bitter to a tainted palate. One that is giddy thinks the earth runs round when it stands stock-still. We judge of every one by our own misdemeanour, and seek to patronize our human frailties by ascribing the same to the Divinity. Truth is innocent, sweet, and displeasing to none but the carnal and such as are displeasing to God. The same royal colour of purple recreates men and exasperates bulls: this purple truth of God, this lustre of sanctity, delights those that understand it; it makes little matter if it offend those that have neither wit nor brains to conceive it, yea, this makes more for its commendation.

Nothing shows the inestimable worth and comeliness of truth more than that it seems worthless and deformed to the wicked. Consider but the causes of this their aversion, and thou shalt see that they render it much more amiable. Of all crosses and afflictions truth seems the most harsh and burdensome, because particular afflictions impugn either one only pleasure or at least but some few, but truth fights them all together, and proclaims war at once against all other kind of vices. Therefore they hold it the saddest adversary they have, and for the same reason think they can revenge themselves no ways more upon their enemies nor sting them more piquantly than by speaking truth to their disadvantage: the reason is, because what harm soever one most dreads to himself, his passion makes him wish the same to his enemy; and because he dreads no kind of evil more than truth, therefore, he tells all he knows to his adversary's prejudice, and seeks thus to wound him as with so many poisonous darts. But these causes of offence are arguments which ought to heighten our love and esteem of truth: is not that worthy of all love which hath all vice in such hatred and detestation? If thou hadst one potion which would cure thee of all diseases, thou wouldst not contemn it for being bitter and distasteful, nay, thou wouldst prize nothing more highly: so truth upon that same score is to be loved and adored, although it be even nailed to a cross, though void of beauty and unhandsome. But it is comely of sight and pleasant of taste, not deformed but deiform, not unwise but the wisdom of God: the voice of truth is sweet, and its countenance amiable. It hath God for its seasoning, it cannot be unsavoury, or disgustful, or tainting. That which makes God

happy must not be noisome, neither can it make thee miserable. What shall I say? God is Truth, and can He be either more distasteful to thee than gall, or not more lovely than light? Go to then, take the courage to look it in the face, to affect it, to put thyself under its tuition and patronage. This is the main maxim of a spiritual life, that as carnal people hate nothing more than truth, so those that walk the paths of spirit have nothing in higher esteem or desire. What is more dear or useful to an archer than his eyes; and what ought to be more desirable to a reasonable man than truth, which is the eye of the soul? Archers, and other creatures also made for the behoof of man, if they want their eyes become altogether unserviceable: so our whole life without truth proves but a fruitless business. No one of the senses is more delectable than the sight; and truth surpasseth all the other faculties of the mind, neither is it more pleasing amidst the smiles of prosperity than the frowns of adversity.

Let us therefore begin with an upright conceit of truth to exclude falsehood, deeming nothing more delightful, nothing more excellent than sincere truth of spirit. Most men because they believe not this are apt to grant themselves now and then a little indulgence to nature and self-love, and the propensions of the flesh, though but in petty matters, mixing with a most subtle dissimulation and self-cozenage foreign comforts, that so they may mitigate the austerity which they conceive or fear accompanies the spirit; and not trusting sufficiently to it and God, they reserve as yet some relics of their flesh and will, of which they are loath to despoil themselves, that they may make their retreat thither in time of need, not daring by a total self-denial to

give themselves entirely to God and the spirit, as if some corrosives did attend His intimate familiarity. These people deceive themselves, for this is not the spirit of truth. This spirit is a most simple and transparent thing, and therefore that will not be true and genuine which is so confounded and intoxicated. The flesh and the spirit are two things so different, that they cannot be combined into one simple. The spirit of truth ought to be so refined and sincere, that it is not enough to dread and abhor all the feigned soothings of the flesh, all the pernicious dictamens of worldlings, and the forciblest insinuations of self-love, but one must moreover despoil oneself of himself and his own soul, and renounce totally his own will and all created contentments, yea, even intellectual and otherwise lawful, to seek God alone and in Him possess all things.

The spirit is somewhat more sublime and refined than is the soul, the understanding, or nature. Hear thy Jesus saying, God is a Spirit, and those that adore Him must do it in spirit and in truth. Wherefore that thou mayest adore God as thou oughtest, and serve Him perfectly in truth of spirit, thou must rear thyself above all creatures and created affections and breathe after and be enamoured upon the Divine truth alone; and, as one ready to depart out of this world, bid adieu to thyself and all creatures, adhering by pure charity to our Lord, becoming one spirit, as St. Paul speaks, with God Who is Truth itself. Force thyself from thyself, that is from thy vicious stock, that thou mayest be ingrafted in Him: sever thyself from thyself, that thou mayest be united to thy Creator: loosen thyself from thyself, that thou mayest be fastened to the Cross of Jesus: root thyself out of thy

wicked self, that thou mayest be implanted in all goodness: fly from thy own nature, and thou shalt find a sanctuary in God: lose thyself unfeignedly, and thou shalt find thyself really.

CHAPTER III.

Of purity of spirit.

Do not in anything, O coheir of Christ, become like unto the beasts, thou who mayest become one spirit with God; thou mayest resemble them in nothing at all. Thou oughtest to tread under foot all the delights of flesh and of nature, not reserving any one from a total renunciation. One alone is able to mar the relish of truth; one alone will tarnish the lustre of the spirit. Great things are oftentimes overpowered by little ones, a small quantity of vinegar spoils a whole vessel of the strongest wine, a little drop of ink infects and discolours a vial of the fairest water. Why wilt thou blemish the candour of truth and nobleness of the spirit with a petty delight so trivial and so momentary? Why dost thou debase thyself so much below thy sublime condition? Why wilt thou leave the bosom of God and His sweet embracements to solace thyself with the silly dregs of creatures, since thou ought not to descend from the Cross of Christ for all the kingdoms of the world. O miserly and base-minded man, since thou hast already employed so many talents towards the purchase of an invaluable margarite, wilt thou at last break off the bargain for one single half-penny? Nay, thou art more foolish than this; for such a

merchant would lose nothing, he only would not gain the jewel, all his money would be restored to him again; but restitution will not be made to thee of those incomparable delights thou didst forfeit; and because thou wilt not relinquish a frivolous toy thou losest a genuine spirit. Why, having consummated so happily a long race, dost thou fall short of the prize at the very goal for want of running a little further? Do not think it burdensome and noisome to abstain from all; as thou couldst wean thyself from greater so mayest thou from lesser, as from many so from more, as from most so from all.

What is the reason that having embraced so many mortifications, corporal austerities, humiliations, disgraces, fastings, lying on the bare ground, thou art vanquished and made prisoner to thy own appetite, by some bit of meat, or other sensual delight? Wilt thou be undone thinkest thou, if thou wholly mortify thy palate? The Angels fast continually, and yet live most happily; yea, the devils are not tormented by their long abstinence, no nor creatures; for there are some of them which without this grosser food enjoy nature pleasantly, and live only as it were upon the spirit. Hold always thyself to be ranked in a higher class than apes and wolves, and by that means thou shalt never be tempted with their pleasures. Art thou sorry that thou singest not like a grasshopper? I believe not; or that thou feedest not with the vulture upon carrion? much less: and the reason is, because these contentments are of another kind and order; so if thou hold thyself a man thou wilt contemn all these pleasures which are proper to beasts, as being impertinent. What if thou consider thyself an associate of the Angels? What if

thou adhere to God, becoming one spirit with Him? Thou mayest want now and not be miserable, what thou art to want for all eternity, and yet be happy. As thou wert not sorry being come to man's estate to want the toys and baubles of children, so being made an Angel or demi-god, thou shalt not grieve for the pleasures of men. If thou mightest at a wish be changed from man into an Angel, wouldst thou not be content upon that supposition perpetually to abstain from eating? Behold, now for a time thou mayest enjoy thy wish. When thou hast glutted thyself with good cheer, thou canst without any difficulty despise all dainties; and why canst not thou do the same out of a strong appetite to virtue? Sickness of body makes thee abhor and loathe them, and why cannot health of mind? Why deemest thou that impossible to virtue which is so easy and necessary to infirmity? If feebleness of nature can make all sensual delights irksome, why cannot the strength of grace do the same? If thou find sometimes a loathsome tediousness of heavenly and spiritual things, persuade thyself the same of carnal. Thou canst live in this exile even with danger of incurring hell-fire though thou be not inebriated with the joys of Heaven; so mayest thou also upon the future hopes of Paradise, though thou bid a long fast to these muddy and dreggy pleasures. How many millions of men eat their daily bread in toil and sorrow, and nevertheless still maintain life; and shalt thou alone die because void of such contentments? Thou hast lived sometimes in anguish, live now without pleasure: thou hast been often oppressed with grief, be now only not jocund. If thou art ashamed to think with the commonality of men, be ashamed also to seek thy

content with the commonality of beasts. Nay, beasts are more abstemious, as who are satisfied with fewer and more obvious pleasures than the most part of men. And thou must frame the same dictamens concerning other solaces both of sense and soul, or whatsoever enjoyment of our own will.

Thou must be eternally divorced from all things, and thou mayest be so, and that without any danger to thyself, yea, without trouble. But if thou desire to renounce all pleasure, renounce thy own will even in the smallest things, even in things just and lawful. Beware lest if thou be found with the cloak of self-will, the domineering flesh, which makes use of all advantages, catch hold of its skirts, as the Egyptian lady did of Joseph's, that is to say, of thy appetites so linked with thy will, and solicit thee to play the naught. The very skirts are hold enough whereby to draw thee to such a fact: great overthrows are occasioned by petty neglects: unless thou wholly disrobe thyself and walk naked, thou wilt not be altogether void of danger. Despoil thyself, I say, entirely of thy own will; do not wear thy own undoing, do not clothe thyself with danger of thyself. When Elias was carried up to Heaven, he left his cloak behind him; and each one that betakes himself to a heavenly life, if he will do it securely, must relinquish his own will. Quit all self-interest and self-delight, quit thyself of thyself in all things; having broken the greater cords which manacled thee, why wilt thou endure the lesser with such an abridgment to the liberty of thy spirit? A mastiff that is tied up is not at freedom because his chain is so long that he can frisk and play a little to and fro. It fares with the most part not much otherwise than with a sparrow which a child holds by a thread at its foot, which being let off his

hand, thinks itself free and flies cheerfully the length of the thread, but then being checked it falls to the ground, and finds itself still captive: so a soul remains as it were with a thread at its foot if it do not totally quit all, and thinking itself at liberty after some time it will disgracefully fall into the filth or puddle of some gross imperfections. Yea, although it escape the ensnarements of the flesh and demean itself uprightly, nay even soar by contemplation up to Heaven, if it be clogged with its own will, it will be detained and entangled even in those sublime regions. Although a sparrow make an escape out of the prison of the child's hand, if it carry the thread along with it, it will find its destruction nigh to heaven, being encumbered and entangled by it on the tops of trees.

But, perchance, thou wilt yet hold it very insupportable to be wholly deprived of thy own will and pleasure. What if I should tell thee that it is not insupportable even to wish for sorrow and suffering? for it will not seem burdensome to be deprived of all pleasure if the privation itself be pleasant and delectable. The vigour of the spirit reacheth to this, the inventiveness of grace can bring it to pass, rendering all gustful relishes so distasteful that all sweet things become unsavoury and fastidious; and bitter, on the contrary, delicious and toothsome. Nature many times effects, that what is harsh to one is gustful to another, and will grace be less operative? The longings of women make them covet ridiculous extravagances, coals, clay, mortar, and to loathe meats exquisitely seasoned; and that which happens so obviously to a womanish indisposition, shall it be thought impossible to Divine healthfulness? A corrupt and queasy stomach rules the appetite, and shall a sound and masculine mind have less or no

sway over the will? Be not then frighted, O dejected creature, with what thou hearest of a spiritual life, for it is not at all troublesome or noisome, although it necessarily embraces all troublesome and noisome things. Let not an empty name or conceit terrify thee; be but confident and accost them, and thou shalt frighten the very difficulties themselves. Some relate of certain enchanted treasures which are in the custody of terrifying ghosts and spirits; but if any one be so resolutely hardy as contemning those phantasmas to assail them, they are presently put to flight and vanish to nothing, in such sort that they appear no more, but permit the accoster to enjoy those riches in all peace and security. Nothing more is requisite to effect this but courage and resolution. Be but valiant in purchasing these spiritual treasures, and all those bugbears of pretended difficulties will suddenly disappear. Set upon them undauntedly and thou shalt enjoy without any great painstaking the hidden manna of a spiritual life. Bees work honey sheltered under the homely roof of a rough-cast hive.

CHAPTER IV.

How truth is made manifest by faith: and of the fruit and practice of this virtue.

He walks in falsehood and forgery not in truth nor spirit who takes not faith for his path and guide. Truth dwells very remote from sense. This heavenly flower grows not in our gardens; it is not nourished with flesh and blood; it is not to be found amidst the dung of our muddy and material substances. We are at all turns cheated in corporal goods, even those which we behold with our eyes and finger with our hands. A whole oar in the water seems broken; a square tower to one that stands at a great distance seems round; the very light of the sun, which is all the faith our eyes are endowed with, cozens them oftentimes by representing colours that are not existent: and how then shall we avoid being misled in the affairs of our soul which we see not, and in spiritual and Divine things which are so much above our reach and capacity? All the race of mankind was grown quite blind through the night of error, like one shut up in a dark dungeon without either window or chink to let in the least glimmering of light. The learneder sort of philosophers were of opinion we knew no more than what we knew was false, or rather that we knew only this one truth, that we knew nothing at all; and they were so swollen and

puffed up with vanity that none but Heaven could give an allaying remedy. One among them did think that the master of truth was to be the Son of a God. Behold now, O Thou Son of the Highest O Thou Eternal Truth, behold O Thou Wisdom of Thy Father, Thou didst descend from Heaven, O Light of the world, to illuminate it, to teach us truth; and why do not men make more account of so great a benefit, why do they contemn this blessing of faith? What imports it to believe truth if we ourselves practise falsehood? saving truth is good works, and the true word the deed of the word. The Word of God became Flesh that the work of man might become truth, because the Truth of God is become operative.

All is mere falsehood and vanity which is not according to the doctrine of Jesus: why do we neglect the practice of this great blessing, contenting ourselves with a dead kind of faith We should reap great advantage from our faith if we knew how to use it, and work as we ought according to its prescript, greater than if we beheld those things it affirms with our eyes. All by faith believe true things, but they ought also to believe truly, which all seem not to do. If thou believe, O malapert soul, what Christ taught, work accordingly. If it be true that it behoved Jesus to suffer, and so to enter into His glory; if it be true that God ordains all for the good of the just, why art thou afflicted at some trivial crosses and calamities? Why dost thou account them losses, which when they are patiently taken, faith teacheth us to be the soul's greatest enrichment? If thou believe this to be true, as in very truth it is, thou oughtest rather to rejoice and comfort thyself. If thou shouldst behold some one of the holy Prophets with thy corporal eyes, as

David or St. John Baptist; it thou shouldst see one raised from death, or an Angel from Heaven, who were to tell thee from Almighty God, that His will is that thou bear this cross patiently, because it will be for thy greater good and no little gain, would it not suffice to make thee refrain from all impatience? Nay, would it not replenish thee with such joy as seized the Apostles, when they went away rejoicing because they were made worthy to suffer reproaches for the Name of Jesus? And why dost thou not now do the same? Thou oughtest not to esteem that miraculous message as infallible as a matter of faith, for in that case one might lawfully sometimes entertain a doubt, since the evil spirit might delude him or he himself be deluded in his senses. Therefore, if this truth as matter of faith be more certain than if an Angel had revealed it from Heaven, why ought it to be less persuasive? Our manner of working follows the certitude of our knowledge and the judgment we frame of a thing; and proportionable to this knowledge must needs be the excellency of our operation. Wherefore whosoever desires to walk in truth, let him square the actions and paths of his life according to the model of his faith, believing not only true things, but after a true manner, lest he become ridiculous to the Angels and joint-secretary with the devils, who are all solifidians, their belief being barren of works.

What avails it to know the way to Heaven if we do not walk it? The wicked spirits know it better than we, and nevertheless, because they stand still and advance not, they are devils. Tell me, who is in a better condition, thou that wilt not do good or the devils that cannot. It is all one in most things not to have a will and to be impotent; yea, it is more damnable and reproachful to

thee who wilt not when thou mayest. The devils believe and tremble; I wish thou, when thou believest, wert possessed with a just fear. Why dost thou not tremble at the judgments of God, considering their certainty and the uncertainty of thy own condition either to eternal punishment or joy? What is the reason, if we believe the greatness of the Divine Goodness in Itself and His immense charity and inestimable benefits towards us, what is the reason, I say, that we do not correspond in love, fidelity, and observance? but rather dare offend Him though but venially, and do not worship and love Him indefatigably with all the extent of our strength, Who employed all the force of His omnipotency in creating and conserving us, and loves us both perfectly and eternally, and loves us even to the end, yea, even unto death? What is the reason that we are always senseless to our own good, and shameless towards His Majesty whether we believe or believe not truly, while we remain so senselessly benumbed? If we have not a firm belief, what greater folly, since men give credit in all things to flatterers, because they speak according to their palate and profit, than to disbelieve matters of faith so much importing us to be so, and redounding so much to our credit and profit, that they be true and undoubted? What greater irreverence than to believe a man, all men being obnoxious to lying and deceit, and not believe God speaking things profitable to us, and attesting them by so many miracles? But if we believe these things and belie them with our actions, what greater absurdity and derision of God than to reject His most amiable goodness, contemn His love, His Blood, His benefits, and either not dread the pains of Purgatory and hell, or not hope for and most

ardently desire the glory of Heaven, which God esteems matters of high concernment, and as such eggs us on both by threats and promises to good works? What greater madness than to expose ourselves by our own negligence to the hazard of forfeiting eternal glory, or at leastwise enduring a long Purgatory.

We must be sure to make our works square in all exactly with our belief, and adhere more tenaciously, than if those objects were patent to the eye or any other sense or experiment. Thou hast received the Sacred Body of Christ, or art present at the dreadful Sacrifice of the Mass; if thou believe that Christ is really present with thee, thou oughtest to behave thyself with greater submission and veneration than if thou didst clearly behold Him with thy eyes, and to pray to Him with a livelier confidence than if the heavens were opened to thee as they were to St. Stephen, and thou beheldest the Hierarchies of Angels accompanying Christ coming to thee to receive thy petitions; for thou mayest be more infallibly ascertained by faith that He is upon the altar, than if thou didst see Him with thy corporal eyes. Let every one procure after this manner to penetrate the truths of Divine faith, and strengthen himself in their certainty, making his works consonant to his belief. But how dost thou proceed consequently and not rather cozen thyself when thou sayest thou esteemest the least degree of glory more than the empire of the whole world; and, nevertheless, to gain Heaven thou wilt not deny thyself the least pleasure; and art so besotted upon temporal things, that thou toilest and moilest without respite for their purchase. This certainly cannot stand good unless thou esteem earthly and perishable goods more than heavenly and eternal.

CHAPTER V.

Of the hope of pardon, and zeal of penance.

The more virtuous one is the more he hates sin; the more he hates it, the more he desires its destruction: and therefore God desires more to pardon sin than the penitent himself who begs pardon. God is most accomplished in all goodness, and therefore He of all others most hates sin. If the sinner who is evil hates his own sin and desires its destruction, how much more God Who is supremely good? Every one seeks his own ends and commodity; God alone seeks thine, and covets thy salvation; doubt not then of pardon and the Divine assistance. We have a most sufficient surety, the Son of God, if we would but resolve upon our conversion. There is neither good nature wanting to the creditor nor ability in the bondsman: do not then despair, O sinner, by reason of the vastness of thy debt; it is but a trifle in regard of the infinite mercy of God and endless merits of Christ. Jesus crucified is our inexhaustible treasure. It were a simple thing to think that the exchequer of a vast empire, if it were granted to thy use, were not sufficient to defray thy petty debt of a few pounds; and it is more simple to make delays in discharging thy debt to Almighty God, hoping He will be content to accept the merits of Jesus for thy payment.

It will be ridiculous, if thou be unjust to thyself,

who seeks to be profitable and beneficial to others. How much content would it cause thee, if thou hadst occasioned the conversion of St. Austin, or St. Mary Magdalen, or St. Paul the Apostle, or some other great sinner, and drawn him to God: and without all doubt thou would endeavour that now, if thou thought it lay in thy power to make any one become truly penitent and as holy as Magdalen. Remember that it is in thy power mediating the grace of God to operate this thyself, that is, to become truly penitent and heartily compunct for thy offences, even small ones, and very fervourous and devout. Convert thyself, and glory far more in thy own conversion than another's. What man that is well in his wits, if he himself were at the point of starving would give a loaf of bread to another who were scarce pinched with hunger, and stood but in small need of that merciless courtesy, suffering himself in that utmost extremity to perish with famine? Admonish thyself, exhort thyself, preach to thyself; nothing is wanting to a remission of thy sins but thy desire, thy sorrow, thy disposal, and this also by a special favour. Behold God stands expecting thee, ready to give greater supplies if necessary. Thou hast already a pledge of His good-will, thy own will and desire of good, which is from God.

I know not how it comes to pass, that thou being compounded of a body like to brute beasts and a soul allied to God, thou seekest all ways and means to preserve thy body, and slightest and neglectest what may make for the health and integrity of thy soul. Thy chief solicitude ought to be placed upon the chiefest thing. Let thy first care be concerning thy soul, for which thy body was framed and moulded: and if the first, then for these reasons it

must be the sole and only. The diseases of the soul are greater and more in number, and more pernicious; its cure is certain and without all peradventure, since they are cured who only have a real desire to be cured; but the cure of the body is deceitful, for those that are cured recover not presently, but by degrees; besides corporal medicines are harder, bitterer, and more costly, not always at hand, but must be fetched from beyond the seas, and almost the world's end; but the remedies of the soul are more easy and obvious, and may not only be had at home but even within thyself, nor needest thou go further than thy own will. Why dost thou not then give redress to so many maladies of thy soul, since thou art so solicitous for any the least indisposition of thy body?

O supreme truth of God illuminate me, for this proceeds out of ignorance, for the soul resents and feels the alterations of the body, but the body feels not the diseases of the soul—they can only be felt and known by the mind—but seeing that very thing, to wit, the soul, which ought to judge of them, is in such a languishing condition, therefore it resents them not, as being past all sense, nor seeks for redress; and by how much the worse it is, so much the less sensible it is of the evil; how much more sick it is, so much the less doth it apprehend its sickness; even as the members of our body are never worse than when they are past all sense of being ill. O Lord, in what a languishing state are our souls which resent not so many defects, distractions, negligences, and irreverences towards Thee, Who dwellest in them; grant me grace that I may wash away with a torrent to tears even the least fault, and that I may sorrow with my whole heart for it; nor ever endure in myself the least offence against Thee.

What pretence can man allege why he delays his conversion and adheres not to God with all his forces? Is it because he is insensible of the evil, it being not patent to the eye? but now we are taught it by faith, which is more certain than our eyesight. Or because our nature is infirm and prone to vice? but for this very reason it ought to seek the support and supplies and favour of God, lest being destitute of all help and redress, it lie still in its infirmity exposed to its enemies. Is it because there are more incentives to sin? It is much mistaken; there are far more and forcible ones to justice, and to make head against sin. If the world exhort us, God dissuades us; if nature incline us, grace refrains us; if the devil tempt us, the Angels inspire us. Or is it because the wicked flourish in a prosperous condition? O pure madness! to love a momentary prosperity, and not fear an eternal calamity! or because thou hopest to have time in in thy old age to reform thyself, for God hath patiently expected many? O senseless! life is not promised thee, but pardon is proffered thee. O ungrateful! thou abusest the grace and patience of God. Look what thou dost; God will not be taxed of injustice if He grant thee not pardon when and how thou wilt, since thou wilt not accept it when He makes a proffer. Or is it, lastly, because the way of virtue and a spiritual life is thorny and troublesome? but will that of hell or the flames of Purgatory, trowest thou, be any whit more easeful or pleasant?

CHAPTER VI.

The model of a sinner is set before our eyes.

O you Cherubim and Seraphim who veil your face and feet, because you are ashamed that ye love not my good God sufficiently, lend me your tongues, lend me the voice of an Archangel and the trumpet of God, that I may alarm the whole world, and sound a summons to all mortals: arise ye dead even while ye live, and come to judgment: come that ye may give your verdict upon a strange and stupendous fact which happened but very lately. Come, that ye may be moved to indignation; come, that ye may be moved to laughter; or rather, come, that ye may be moved to tears. I will tell you a lamentable story which I know to be certainly true, and you shall judge whether it be not such. Certain robbers dragged a woman tied neck and heels through foul and stenchy places, and would needs cast her into a glowing furnace too, too dreadful for its raging flames. As they were going they met a king, one that for power and other princely qualities was matchless; nay, he was in all points so accomplished, that nature seemed to have bestowed all her perfections upon him. He was more valiant than Samson, more wise and wealthy than Solomon, more fortunate and bountiful than David. He taking compassion upon this poor woman, to rescue her out of their hands (for he was all alone) exposed

himself to death; and having received many wounds, and lost much blood, he put the robbers to flight; and to cleanse her who was all covered over with filth, there being no fair water at hand, he made her a bath of his own blood; he took her for his spouse though she were a blackamoor and very deformed, he crowned her queen, he built her a magnificent palace, he adorned it most artificially, engraving everywhere his own images, which were to be so many memorials of him and incentives of love to her: he allotted her a family, and gave her a fair retinue of servants; and which is more, he doted so upon her that he himself would become her servant even in mean offices; his sole joy was to be always in her company or thinking upon her, desiring no other recompense of so much kindness but a reciprocal affection; lastly, he made her heiress of his kingdom, promising that this should be the least expression of his bounty, if she would only prove kind and loyal. Nevertheless, as if so many benefits had tended only to procure treachery and hatred, contemning her spouse and king, she solicited his very slaves and grooms of his stable to acts of adultery; yet they more loyal to their king, did partly fly, and partly were murdered out of mere passion, for they chose rather to perish than to be eye-witnesses of such disloyalty to their king and her spouse. In a word, every one resisted with detestation the queen's unworthiness; nor did she for all that desist to compel them, prostituting herself to all. Neither did she here put a period to her wickedness; but seeing him still kind towards her, she hatched a piece of unparalleled treachery, she betrayed him into the hands of his enemies whom he hated even to death. This wicked woman made him their slave, and compelled him to serve

his deadliest foes, who blindfolded him and made him their laughing-stock: and which was strangest of all, being altogether insensible of so many gifts and courtesies, she reigned most impudently in all security and jollity, as if she had done a piece of remarkable service. Now judge, O ye men! now give your verdict. Tell me if there be any one among you who will not be replenished with indignation against this woman, and will not say: the Lord liveth, because the woman that did this is a child of death. But the story is not yet at an end. Hitherto I have showed her wickedness now I must show her folly. For while she thus hated and scorned her fair spouse and king, she nevertheless kissed the pictures of him which stood engraven here and there in his palace, and reverenced them exceedingly for their beauty, which notwitstanding in comparison of the king himself were ugly; nor did they entirely resemble all his features, but one his eyes only, another his hands, a third his countenance; and they being both together, if he desired to embrace her, she turned her back disdainfully, and loathing his person, sought after his image. Judge now, O mortals. The Lord liveth, because the woman that doth this is a child of laughter.

Oh, I wish I could entrap thee in the snare of Nathan and make thee relent with the penance of David! Thou, O my soul, art this woman. This saith the Lord God of Israel! I have anointed thee, O man, king over all the creatures of the world; I have created all things for thy use; I have delivered thee out of the hands of Saul and robbers, to wit, Lucifer and the devils; out of the filth in which thou didst wallow; out of the flames of hell to which thou wert sentenced; I cleansed thee with

My own Blood! I gave thee the heavenly mansion-house of thy Lord and God, and all the delights of Heaven together with it; I appointed thee the house of this world as a kingly palace, and all creatures to be thy attendants; and if these benefits of thy creation, redemption, and glorification, be but slender ones, I will heap far greater upon thee: for which of all these dost thou persecute and contemn Me? Do My kindnesses seem crimes to thee? Thou art angry at Me, and punishest Me as men do malefactors, who are chastised with the instruments by which they offended; thou abusest My very gifts, condemning Me in them, as if I became criminal by My well-doing. Which of My favours deserves these thy injuries? Tell me, and I will amend it; I will be the revenger upon Myself, because I desired nothing more than thy good-will, nor do I desire, nor shall I. To make thee love Me I am ready to destroy the world, if it were injurious to thee that I made it. If I were faulty in dying for thee, I will die again to make satisfaction and come to an atonement. If it were a crime that I prepared My glory and Heaven for thee, upon condition thou wouldst pardon Me, I would relinquish it once again and evacuate myself, depriving myself of My majesty and glory. Why dost thou think those things, which if they were done betwixt man and man would be accounted virtues worthy of praise, being now done to thee by God, to be crimes deserving nothing less than disgrace and death? But if thou esteem those things as benefits, which I have heaped upon thee with all the extent of My omnipotency and purchase of My sufferings, why dost thou seek to affront Me still more and more? Perchance my offence was in this, that My benefits were so many and so great (for in each particular I can acknowledge no fault),

and therefore thou wilt punish Me with the greatness and multitude of contempts, and strive to outnumber My kindnesses by thy affronts. Behold, thou alone hast picked up the most notorious debaucheries of the lewdest women against Me, thy Lover, to cast them into My dish. Thou didst take complaisance in the impudency of Putiphar's wife, and thou, itching to practise the same against Me, covetest to play the harlot with the servants which I assigned thee, to wit, creatures; and thou compellest them to this; nor wilt thou learn by their loyalty, who run from thee like Joseph, and either pass away presently or perish: they all are full of a deep resentment and replenished with sorrow for the throes and pangs of those that being violated by thee are ready to be delivered, it being much against their will that thou sinnest with them, or art enamoured upon them to the prejudice of thy Spouse and their Lord and Sovereign. But thou, heaping iniquity upon iniquity, slanderest them for giving thee the slip, and complainest of them for running away. This is the common complaint of mortals, that their gods are mortal, that creatures are fading and perishable. Thou criminatest them for being the occasion of thy adultery, when they as innocent, faithful to their God and thy well-wishers, fly from thee that thou mayest not commit it by loving them with an inordinate affection. But thou repliest, saying, If I were wealthy, if I had riches, if I enjoyed this or that commodity, I would serve God peaceably, nor desire more; but because I have lost all, and the goods of this world fly me, I cannot but do thus; want compels me to sin, poverty puts me upon unlawful desires to the great prejudice of my own spirit. Leave off complaining, cease to blame them, and rather give ear to creatures, who

teach thee thy duty better than Joseph. Behold, say they, our Lord forgetful of Himself gives thee all; neither is there anything which He hath not subjected to thy power, to do with it what thou wilt, this only excepted, not to love us; how canst thou be so ill-natured as to offend thy God? how can we admit of this thy love which thy Creator hath reserved to Himself? He hath given us to thee that thou mightest give thyself to Him; we serve thee that thou mayest serve Him; learn of us to serve Him to death, and play not the adulterer. We are destroyed that thou mayest subsist, for we have neither scandalized thee, nor given thee ill-example; we covet not to be loved by thee, but rather wish thee to give Him the best thing thou hast, to wit, thy love. Love Him and praise Him as we do. Learn zeal of us, for to the end thou mayest do so we willingly suffer ourselves to be destroyed. Learn to die that the glory of God may live, for to the end thou mayest live we die. Learn humility of us, for being thy sisters, equal in nobleness of parentage, yea, elder by birth, we disdain not to serve thee even in abject things, that thou mayest reign with thy Spouse and love Him. That thou mayest live eternally with Him we are turned into filth and corruption, nor do we detract any the meanest offices for thy sake, with manifest hazard of our destruction; only we cannot brook that on the altar of God, that is thy heart, idols of us should be placed through a disorderly affection towards us, thou thinking oftener upon us than Him, and sacrificing to us not beasts but thy own soul. Fie! Fie! Be ashamed to make a celestial soul the victim of a piece of earthly metal, or vain honour, or momentary pleasure, and in it Divine grace, and by that eternal glory.

Thou tookest content more, O soul, in the treachery of Dalila, and forthwith attemptest to practise the like upon Me thy God and thy Lover. Thou betrayedest Me into captivity, like Samson, to My greatest enemies, and madest Me a slave to the Philistines of thy sins; for thou madest Me serve thee in them, thou madest Me toil in thy iniquities, neither have I any other foe so hateful to Me as sin; thou nevertheless art the occasion, that I Who make the sun to rise, and send showers at due seasons, watering the fruits of the earth, ripening the apples on the trees, furnishing the pastures with grass for the cattle's sustenance; thou, I say, art the occasion that I serve thy gluttonous appetite, and in the mines which I engendered in the bowels of the earth become a drudge to thy avarice. O villainy! to make God the servant of villainies, the captive of iniquity, the caterer of wickedness, the steward of malignity! Thy vices also made a scorn of Me as one that were blinded: no man would dare play the thief in presence of a severe judge, nor do boys any unseemly act before their master, but put out his eyes and thy will dare anything, they will use ridiculous gestures, and flout him without control or danger; so thou also, though thou knewest Me to be present, didst commit all kind of wickedness, because thou wouldst make Me blind. Thy sins, My foes, did that, which blinding thee, made thee judge the same of Me; and in such a condition thou deliveredest Me into My enemies' hands, that I could not kill them but I must die Myself; nor could I, indeed justly, Samson-like, better kill sin than by My own death.

CHAPTER VII.

The second part of the parable: and how we must use creatures.

Yea, and that thy ridiculous proceeding, O my soul, is to be deplored with inconsolable tears, when contemning the true beauty of thy Spouse, thou adorest its imperfect shadows in the mean images of creatures. If a great Emperor should appoint a day and place for his inauguration by the due homage of his Peers, and the people being assembled for that end, he should come forth in robes of state carrying his crown, sceptre, chain of gold, and other venerable ensigns of majesty, and seating himself in a conspicuous throne in the midst of the market-place, expected each moment the rites and ceremonies of consecration: if in this expectancy they should all forsake him and turn themselves to his statue ill-polished, half-defaced, and carrying scarce so much as a resemblance of his features; and should all adore and do homage to it, leaving the good Emperor all alone, nobody regarding him nor showing him any respect at all; what a cold entertainment would this be? how would he blush and remain confounded? But what if they should not only desert him but his statue also, and do their obeisance to the print of his foot, and that in no better element than clay, frustrating all his expectation, and slighting his majesty. Thou dost this, O my soul, while thou

lovest and adorest the mangled and misshaped goodness of creatures, which is but a trace or imperfect print of the Divine, contemning that original goodness, so majestic, so complete, so beautiful. O men, why leave we God alone in His majesty, and turn our backs unseemingly to Him, Whom we were created to adore, preferring a piece of clay before Him? What an indignity was it that Barabbas should be preferred before Christ, and Christ sentenced to the Cross; and how great a one will it be, for dirt to be preferred before the Divinity, and be adored as God!

Why art thou thus cheated, O my soul? Know that all created goodness whatsoever is only a rude and duskish image of God. Why does a blurred and slubbered draught please thee when thou mayest delight thy eyes with the polished and lively original? Place before a weary traveller a living and a carved horse; will he choose the carved one, since he must be forced to carry it and not it him, to come more commodiously to his journey's end? Why dost thou burden thyself with created goods to walk more easefully the journey of this life? they are only resemblances of the Living Good: he only shall walk without weariness who hath God for companion of his journey. Set a real and a painted dish of meat before one that is hungry, will he covet to feed on the painted? and why then desirest thou shadows and images and seekest not after a real good? Man is more absurd than a dog, who if he light on a piece of bread he takes it, and leaves it not to bite at a shadow; but thou leaving God, embracest His shadow. Why desirest thou a part rather than the whole? If one that is thirsty see two pitchers, the one whole, the other broken, will he leave the whole one and content himself with the

ear of the broken, or some other fragment, to take up water to quench his thirst? Creatures are only partial images of the Divine Goodness, Whose perfections are divided among created natures; why wilt thou choose a part of that whole, which avails not but in the whole? apart, neither do creatures avail, singly nor all together, but only in God; broken pitchers, nor any fragment of them in particular, nor all together are useful to take up water; and the thirst of our appetite can only be satiated with the integrity of the Divine Goodness.

Learn the true use of creatures; they are not to work upon the will, but to help the memory. Thou, forgetting God, amusest and busiest thy will, but dost not satiate it; and because it is not satiated, thou mayest easily know thou art deluded. Albeit thou love all the goods of this world, yea, and enjoy them all, yet still thy desire will be as empty and hungry as ever. Painted bread doth not fill one, but is only a figure of that which fills: so created goods do not satiate the appetite, but are resemblances of that which satiates, to wit, God. All the goods of this world stand proportioned to our will as a painted fire to a cold hand; one may take it and apply it, but shall find neither warmth nor refreshment. A picture of burning coals pleaseth the eye, but contents not the touch of him that is cold; and created things affect the mind, but do not satisfy the affection. God gave His people monitory memorials of His law, which they were to sew in the skirts of their garments, to hang at their wrists, write in the posts and gates of their houses, lest forgetting the true God of Israel they might fall to adore false ones. No less provident was He in the great house of this world which He built for man; He engraved everywhere in it monitories of Himself

in the posts, in the gates, in the pavements of the earth by such variety of natures, in the roof and arches of the heavens by so many refulgent lights. All the good that is among creatures are so many commandatories to make thee love God, and adore no other; why then, Pharisee-like, contemning this admonition, dost thou dilate them and magnify these borders, possessing more, or coveting more, or deeming anything great besides Him.

Thou crossest and thwartest the designs of God, adoring that very thing for Him, by which He forewarned thee that thou shouldst adore nothing but Him. Go to, cross thy own desire, curbing whatsoever it covets by interposal of the Divine Goodness, that in the desire of things thy appetite may aim at nothing but God. Is anything presented as pleasant and delightful, oppose God forthwith as a strong shield, and say, How will this be in my Spouse. I will not busy myself about this crumb of handsomeness, about this mote of sweetness, but will drink large draughts of pleasure in God, and glut myself with His delicious relishes; I will no longer feed with Lazarus upon crumbs. If a slubbered business can delight thee, will not much more a fair copy? Bulls are diverted and amused by casting a cloak or some other thing before them, on which, without hurt to the man, they spend their fury; and do thou object God to thy roaming desires, that spending themselves fruitfully on Him they may be diverted from created things. By this means, O effeminate spirit, thou shalt both wholesomely and in its own kind defeat the poison of thy own appetite, effecting that the very affection to things which induced an oblivion of God, become to thee a memorial of Divine love and incentive of charity. The desire wherewith the covetous man thirsts after a piece of

money will be more heightened, if an offer be made of a piece of gold; because the value of silver is not only equalized but outstript in gold: so must thou object God to thy itching desire of riches and pleasures, the value of them all being contained in Him with a vast excess. Hence thou shalt experience incredible fruit. God shall incessantly be proposed to thee as present, and thy love towards Him shall be so improved, that thou mayest traffic among the necessary affairs of worldly employments without any great prejudice, till thy spirit being more refined and robustious, thou beest admitted to the straiter embracements of thy Spouse, creatures now not disquieting thee, but becoming so noisome, that this very visible heaven will be loathsome to thy eyes in comparison of my God and my Jesus. He that sees the sun is blind to the stars, and creatures compared with their Creator are unsightly and unsavoury. Stars, because they borrow their light from the sun, are as it were nothing in his presence, they being invisible: so all things that are, because they take from Thee, O God, the Lover of men, their essence and being, are as it were nothing before Thee, before Thy superessential Essence and Goodness.

But there is yet another important commodity redounding to him that loathes creatures. Dost thou hear of any one that loves or desires them? Blush and lament that one so leagued with thee in nature should be so forgetful of God; and stir up thyself and labour to repair this common disgrace by loving thy Creator for both. Deem thyself guilty of all the affection which the world bestows upon perishable things, and make satisfaction by loving eternal. Account thyself a debtor for all the inclinations by which things are carried to their

centre, nor prolong thy payment, rearing thy mind and love more impetuously towards Heaven than a stone is carried downwards from Heaven. All created things seeking by an inbred propension to partake of happiness, show that they love a trace of the Divine Goodness: be thou confounded and lament that thou lovest not more eagerly true goodness and happiness itself, since grace is prevalent above nature. Oh, what a thing must that needs be, whose shadow creatures love with so much vehemency, to which the total love of all things lives and breathes! Do thou endeavour to collect in thyself all the dispersed inclinations, all the errors of desires, that thou mayest hasten towards God, and make amends for the forgetfulness of men.

CHAPTER VIII.

The affections of a true penitent.

Transfer, transfer my sins from me, O most loving Father, Who art in Heaven; for so I am confident to call Thee, animated thereto by the consent and doctrine of Thy best-beloved Son Jesus, so to distinguish Thee from that father in hell, to which I adopted myself by my sins, choosing by them to become a child of the devil, and such I was for a long time. I lay open my horrid and numberless crimes before Thee, which, if it were in my power, I would conceal from Thee, and wash them away with my heart's blood, that Thy Sacred Countenance might not be defiled with such a spectacle. But because the blood neither of all men nor beasts can cancel so much as one of them, therefore I show them to Thee, that with one drop of the Blood of Thy Beloved Son Jesus Thou mayest quite obliterate and deface them. I show to Thee what I have committed against Thee, for my malice doth not lessen Thy Goodness. After all my malignity and innumerable misdemeanours, Thou, O Father, remainest still good. If then I, who am evil, nay, stark naught, am replenished with horror at the sight of my offences, how much more wilt Thou Who art good, yea, goodness itself? How wilt Thou be able to endure such monsters and not forthwith abolish and destroy them? Thou being so good, dost more

detest sin than I that am so bad either now hate it, or ever heretofore loved it. I tried to wash them away with a flood of tears, but no soap will take out these stains besides the Blood of Thy Beloved Jesus. I am in the hell of my own wickedness, and demand not a drop of water as that rich glutton did of Father Abraham, but I that am rich and most wealthy in all iniquity beg a drop of Christ's Blood of the Father of Mercies. My intent is not to defraud Thy justice by this my petition, but only not to offend Thy Goodness; I do more earnestly beg that Thou wilt wash off the stain than remit the pain.

O Heavenly Father, I do equally and with the same arms embrace and welcome Thy justice upon me as I do Thy mercy towards me; I do not so much beg a foregoing of the penalty as a pardon of my faultiness. I wish most earnestly and from the bottom of my heart, that I could collect the desires of all creatures into one, and could make them all beg with joint consent that Thy justice would take revenge upon my delinquency. I would willingly undergo all the pains of hell inflicted both on men and devils, neither should they appal me, upon condition that Thy countenance might not terrify me. Sin is a more hideous evil than they; yea, beyond all comparison; because my sin alone is evil, they are good, because Thou inflictest them. Yea, and if they were all heaped upon me, they would not render me more evil, my malice being mixed and attempered with their good; neither should I be compounded merely and purely of malice, but should have some ingredient of good from Thee, derived to me from Thy justice.

But, O Father of Mercy, I am afraid lest while I seek to detest sin humbly, I sin anew arrogantly.

I could wish I went to hell, if it were possible by doing so to obtain Thy grace. But how dare I that am nothing but an extract of sin wish that, which Thy greatest Saints and choicest favourites have made their suit and humble petition. How dare I wish only a hell, who alone am the sinner of sinners. What place shall I pretend to there? Shall it be in the very centre of it at the feet of Lucifer? If some one of Thy friends had an ambition to be there, how dare I pretend it? That place was desired by some of Thy Saints and proved to them a ladder to Heaven. Thy servant, Blessed Vrigman, of the order of St. Dominic, when he could find no fit place for himself but in the bottom of hell under Lucifer, was invited by a voice from Heaven to mount up thither to a most sublime throne, the Heart of God the Father; and how then dare I covet that place? What then? Will there remain some other place for me below all who am a sinner above all? Shall it be at the feet of Judas? But this is already taken up by Thy servant St. Francis Borgia, who, notwithstanding, quitted it when he reflected that sometime it had been the seat of my Lord and Master, the humble Jesus. What place then remains for me? Shall it be at the feet of him who gave Jesus the buffet on the face, I having given Him many more such injurious blows? or at the feet of Caiphas, seeing I daily condemn Christ and His doctrine? or at the gates of hell, that all who enter there may tread upon me? or shall I expect the precipice of Antichrist into that infernal pit, that I may suffer under his feet? O most bountiful Sovereign! worse than the worst of all sinners am I; there is no place for me in hell, who am unworthy of all place. I hold myself not worthy even of the fellowship of devils,

insomuch that according to my desert a viler and more penal hell ought to be prepared for me. I am the disgrace of nature, the scum and refuse of mankind! If Thou, O Father, wert capable of shame, Thou wouldst be ashamed of nothing save only preserving me in the world, such a horrid and abominable monster as my sins have made me.

Nay, I am a discredit even to the devils themselves, and they might deservedly discard me from their infernal community. Am I not worse than the devils? It is clear I am in my nature, and I do not deny it in my behaviour and carriage; yea, I see many things in myself which force me to grant it. For they were damned for one sin, and that of thought only, whereas mine are infinite and most enormous, and of fact also. What difference then or excess is there betwixt my malice and theirs? as much as there is betwixt a single unity and a number that is numberless. But though we alter these conditions, yet still I must acknowlege my malice greater than theirs, although they had been damned for innumerable offences and I but for one. For they did not sin against a God Who for their sakes became an Angel, neither had they such a full proof of His goodness; they did not sin against a God Who for them vouchsafed to be crucified; they did not sin against a God Who made Himself the food of their souls; they did not sin against a God Who left them such a sublime Priesthood; they did not sin against a God Who by His example gave them the documents of a good life, and did undergo the incessant labours of thirty-three years in inculcating them. But I have sinned (and why dost thou not, O my soul, dissolve into tears at the very thought of it) against a God Who so often hath been so

immensely good on my behalf, Who died for me, Who wept for me upon the Cross with loud outcries, and not a joint of His Body but bewailed each of my offences, in the Garden with tears of blood. I am more unworthy than Lucifer, more unworthy than the devils, more unworthy than Judas, who had not as yet seen Christ dying for him; more unworthy than Antichrist, who will not so often as I experience the great mercy of God; deservedly therefore may they disdain my company; neither is hell worthy of me, nor would it willingly receive my sinfulness.

It is more then than this hell that I deserve. I have merited to be cast out of all nature, lest I dishonour it, who have disgraced its graceful glory. I have murdered, as much as lay in me, its Parent; I have taken the crown of creatures from off His head; I have dishonoured each creature by contemning their Creator: therefore I ought to be the butt and object of all their hatred, and they all rejoice at my destruction. Perchance I should beg this, if it were possible, that I who am the reproach of nature, the despite of grace, the moth of the Divine will, could not have had a being. Notwithstanding, because I deserve to be tormented, what place shall I find fit for it?

Thou, O Infinite Power, O Incomprehensible Wisdom, O Immense Justice, Thou canst tell what to do with me! In the meantime, till a place be found and prepared, I will expect, not beneath Satan, nor at the feet of Judas, nor will I beforehand take Antichrist's place, of all which as yet I acknowledge myself unworthy; but I will place myself at the feet of the Son of God, and His Blessed Mother, standing and weeping at the foot of the Cross of my Jesus; for they are better stored with patience, and will

tolerate me, whom neither the devil nor Judas, nor the rout of the damned, would be able to endure. Pardon me, I beseech Thee, if I intrench upon the patience of Thy Son and His Virgin Mother. Let me lie at the feet of Jesus and Mary; they know long ago how to tread underfoot venemous creatures. I am that poisonous and savage chimera, that four-formed deformity, that manifold monster having the eyes of a basilisk, the head of an asp, the claws of a lion, and the fierceness of a dragon. But, O Father of Mercy, because my Jesus cannot as now walk upon me, a basilisk and asp, nor trample down this lion and dragon (for my sins keep His feet fast bound to the Cross), therefore let the heel of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, my Mother, in the interim bruise this malice of mine; let her crush the head of this serpent by her merciful intercession. I am the cause of her sorrow, and guilty of her tears; she may justly complain of me and take revenge upon me. The feet of the purest Jesus are wel! inured both to tolerate and take away the monsters of our sins. I seek not them amidst banquets and delights as did the Magdalen, but among nails and sorrows; and because I cannot water them with my tears, I covet to be washed with their Blood. I will not entangle those feet, which I behold, with my locks, lest my Lord be forced to fly from the horror and nastiness of my sins: I behold them fettered with sharp irons, and that was my doing. But if it were a grateful piece of service which Magdalen did to these feet, the torment also which was occasioned by my sins could not be ungrateful. I, O Lord, fastened them; my malice was more prevalent towards this, than the goodness of all other creatures. The Angels grieve and stand amazed; creatures tremble and complain; all law disavows it, all right

cries against it; my sins alone exacted the death of Thy Only-Begotten Son and compassed it. I make public profession of this, to the end I may have some share in the prayer of Jesus. He, He it was that prayed for those who crucified Him. Behold me here present, I was the chief crucifier, the prime executioner. I furnished his hands, putting a hammer in his right and a nail in his left; I first of all others gave that hand the dint which transpierced those tender feet. Oh, how much more heinous was my offence than theirs, who executed only Pilate's sentence and the will of the Jews! They being commanded, crucified Him Whom they held no more than a man and a malefactor, and one so disfigured in His whole countenance by that hideous night's work. I have again, as much as in me lay, crucified Him being now glorious, Who for me was heretofore crucified. Which of the Jews beholding Christ as St. Stephen beheld Him, at the right hand of God, durst cry aloud, Crucify Him? But I have been so impudently bold as not only to say it, but even more than do it. I clear and quit the executioners of Christ: they will be confounded in the latter day beholding Him glorious Whom they treated so ignominiously; I, seeing Him that was crucified for my sake glorious, am not confounded, but have again crucified Him! What excuse then shall I be able to pretend?

O Father, as often as I call this to mind, considering Thy infinite mercy, by which Thou didst patiently sustain my so great ingratitude, I cannot but wish Thy exemplary justice upon me; I cannot detrect the pains of hell as due to my iniquity, supposing the pain were void of guilt. Shall Divine love be less forcible than human, or charity more feeble than concupiscence, the love of Thee than

the love of me? If my self-love could make me contemn God, why cannot the love of God make me thoroughly despise myself, and debase myself even to hell? Again, again I embracingly kiss Thy justice. Punish and revenge upon me Thy affronts and just indignation; for I who have profaned and violated all Thy attributes, seeking to destroy them by sin as much as I could, do now wish such a penance and remission as would make a full restitution of all, and leave them in their integrity. They will remain so, O Lord, if out of Thy mercy Thou give me Thy grace, and out of Thy justice my due punishment. Thy servants Moses and Paul desired to be anathematized for their brethren, and I will become accursed and anathema for my God, and the justice of my God, as Christ Jesus was for me. That skinner of Alexandria wished others the joys of Paradise, but allotted for himself the pains of hell-fire, and surmounted in perfection the great St. Anthony. St. Christina chose rather to undergo here unspeakable torments for the relief of the souls in Purgatory than to go immediately to Heaven: and I to render the justice of God, which I have violated, indemnified, ought not to refuse the punishments of hell. Oh, if I could imitate my Jesus, Who, when He was inseparable from His Heavenly Father, stooped to our misery, that He might be a cure for us! and I, inseparable from Thy charity, would become also accursed and anathematized to the very pit of hell; and even there would I embrace my Jesus. I have two arms, the one is humility, which I would put under Him, and unite myself to His Humanity; the other, and that the right, is love, and by it I would embrace His Divinity. O Father, prostrate at the feet of Jesus, I beg and beseech of Thee for His sake that Thou

wilt cleanse me from the ordure of my sins; I hope for His sake to obtain pardon, for Whose sake Thou couldst not obtain of me to forbear sinning. Thy goodness is greater than my malice, and Thy crucified Christ is prevalently powerful to bend and incline Thy goodness, though He prevailed not with me to avert and decline my malice.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the ardent desire of those that desire God.

It is not meet that thou, O faint-hearted spirit, have but a faint desire of that which is the chiefest good. Grace and nature are sisters, and they have the same Author and Parent, God. If thou learnest not of thy Jesus how to frame thy desires, Who desired so earnestly to suffer for thee, that thou mayest be ashamed not to desire most ardently to rejoice with Him: learn at least of natural things how thou art to covet heavenly. Nature affords no good to any creature, unless a strong appetite thereof did go before; and if there be not such a precedent appetency arising from grace, thou shalt never be gifted with any single virtue. Natural things aim at more than they can attain to. Fire when it mounts upwards covets nothing more than to reach its element, and yet it never can reach its home; but yet that excess of desire was requisite, to carry it to a higher region. A stone when it falls covets to descend even to the heart or centre of the earth, and yet it remains on the surface or superfices. What a vehement affection is inbred to beasts towards their offspring. A cow in the

absence of her calf bellows without end, and hastens thither as fast as she can where she thinks to find it. The same innate love arms other creatures which are of a more fearful and soft disposition, and exasperates and renders them fierce and hardy; and this strong desire was necessary to make them break through all difficulties in rearing their young ones. Perfect virtue and union with God is a business full of opposition, and how canst thou overcome this unless thou eagerly and earnestly intend it? A natural appetite is a disposition to natural perfection! and a great and supernatural appetite disposeth a soul to supernatural perfection, and to receive the graces and gifts of God in greater plenty. Christ compared those that traffic for the Kingdom of Heaven to merchants and bankers, and styled them happy that hunger and thirst after justice: combining in the self-same thing two most vehement appetites. There is no stint in desiring to please God; there is no other mean or stint, but that one always, without all mean or interruption, wish and embrace indefatigably the Cross, and never be satiated with suffering. So ought thou to serve God with the whole extent and intenseness of thy mind; and all this is very requisite, that thou faint not under the burden of difficulties; neither is any strength imaginable equivalent to the least particle of the Divine infinitude.

God is infinite, and how then darest thou, O strait-hearted creature, limit and bound thy desires! The fading goods of this world are desired a hundred, yea a thousand times, more than they covet or deserve to be, and are not for all that obtained. God is immense and infinite, and ought to be desired more than infinitely; and why breathest thou after Him so faintly and remissly, and

labourest to possess thyself of Him, being void of this flagrancy of affection? Rouse up thyself and be confounded that thou dost not covet Him more than an ordinary man covets created goods; yea, more than any other creature coveted Him. A most intense desire is a golden key that unlocks the gates of Heaven, and opens the passage to our spiritual progress: for as no mean thing is compassed without some precedent desire of it, so the most difficult and precious of all others cannot be attained but with a most ardent one. To obtain terrene joys, it is requisite that our desire far exceed their worth and value, that so it may make us master all rubs that occur in their purchase; and is it not an arrant shame that our affection to the eternal joys of God's infinity should be so pitifully remiss, and rate them so much below their worth, below what they exact and we may afford?

Grant me grace, O Lord, Thou Who out of Thy excessive desire of suffering for me wert strainted so far as to be baptized in Thy own Blood, that I may be carried with a most intense desire towards Thee. What ought to be dear to me either in Heaven or earth besides Thee, my God and the Lover of me? and next to Thee, what but to suffer for and with Thee? It is a profound act of contrition, and a love due to the Divine Goodness, to be willing to suffer the pains of hell through all eternity for the least venial sin, yea, to impede the least in anybody else, as much as in me lies: and how much, O Lord, should I covet to suffer for my spiritual advancement and rather than I myself commit it? And, notwithstanding, how little am I solicitous for Thy glory? My whole employment ought to tend to the compassing of this by desire, prayer, sighs, and tears; and since all I can do is

little or nothing in comparison of Thy greatness, my good-will must make amends for my inability and supply for my defectuousness.

CHAPTER X.

Of contemning and relinquishing the world.

Worldly joys as well as discontents conclude always with sorrow and bitterness: but a virtuous course is so privileged, that not only its contentive part, but also the harsh and burdensome, both contains and attains true delight. Why walkest thou the way of spirit with such heaviness and tepidity? Thou canst not set thy affection upon anything of this world without thy great peril and hazard; yea, thou seekest thy own danger, where those things which it prizeth for good are bad and full of corruption, and will corrupt thee also. If a little leaven mar the whole batch, how can he be untainted and unleavened who is so incorporated with the world, whose whole lump is stark naught, where the bad alone are accounted good, and they so numerous. He that is once dead to the world, let him beware he revive not to it again by dying to God, or coveting worldly things, although he neither possess nor enjoy them. The love of temporalities is wont to harm us more than the use and possession of them: it is not the thing but the affection to the thing which hurts us, which affection is more restlessly pressing in its absence. Be not, according to St. Jude, a tree twice dead and unfruitful. He dies to the world who relinquisheth the world; he is defunct to God who returns to it again. Such a

one having lost the fruit and commodities of a worldly life, loseth also the benefits of a spiritual, and consequently is altogether unprofitable and barren to himself. The world cannot endure the sight of one that is dead; a worldly life is a sea, and it harbours not dead bodies, but within three days' space casts them up.

Beware thou be not deceived, if now thou deemest it good when thou hast no commerce with it. Remember that it was evil when thou traffickest with it, and knewest it not superficially and at a distance; and therefore didst relinquish it. Believe rather thy own certain experience than a deceitful opinion; believe rather thyself, an eye-witness, than one that is absent. Know that it is not changed since thou left it, nor grown better by length of time, nor that it affords any more security than it did, but is rather worse every day than other. It decays daily; it dotes more and more by age; an error gains authority by being old; its wine drinks with a stronger relish of malice for being long kept: vices the more inveterate they are get a more undeniable prescription, and new ones arise daily. Because the world was evil thou couldst not brook it, now when it is grown worse, why wilt thou embrace it? It is intolerable and perfidious even to those who did stick constantly and without breach of trust to it, what will it then be to thee, who hast revolted both from it and God, loyal to neither? Wherefore the world will chastise thee as a fugitive, and God will not defend thee, by reason of thy treachery. There are more urgent reasons now of not returning to the world than there were at first of leaving it, or at least the same are now in force which forced thee then to quit it. It is blind and a cheat both to itself and thee, of a base

nature, and to be despised even although otherwise not despicable; because it hinders great good and torments its lovers, beset on all sides with the dangers, not only of temporal things, but which is more, of eternal also. It is nothing else but falsehood and forgery; for besides that it is malicious and habituated in cozening others, it is also cozened itself, in so much that worldly men will deceive thee, even when they intend nothing less than deceits. The very wisdom of the world is pure folly: how then shall truth appear in it? and when all the light it hath is darkness, how great darkness must that needs be? Its whole train of attendance and foundations are instruments of blindness, and dim the eyes of our judgment, to wit, pride, gluttony, lust, envy, ambition, anger, to which we may add treachery, insomuch that, Judas-like, even when it fawns most upon them it betrays its darlings by that kiss to perdition and the power of darkness.

The world is a cheat: it sells its glory, which is nothing, at a high rate. And it were a small matter if it were only nothing, and not ignominious also. Men glory in those things of which they ought to be ashamed: it lies against all experience in telling them that their riches will be permanent, since they pass through so many hands to come to them who now possess them. It holds those things forth for good, each one whereof is no less than a triple torment; the number of evils and vexations are in such an excess, that it affords more than two real afflictions for one seeming happiness. There is no one thing of all we possess but racked us with toil and solicitude how we might compass it, and having compassed it, we are no less tormented with fear and jealousy of it; and when it is lost, with grief for its absence and privation. O heavenly truth!

what great thing, God a mercy! if I do not covet this mere chaos of deceitfulness and vexation? if I contemn for thy sake a thing so contemptible, which were to be contemned if not for itself at least for myself? Many heathen philosophers quitted the world for their own quiet, and why shall not a Christian do it for his and Thy glory? They left it because despicable in itself; and why should not we do it because Thou art inestimable, and the glory which we hope for invaluable. Although the world were good, yet it were folly to prefer it before that which contains all good.

CHAPTER XI.

How peace is to be obtained.

Thou canst not live well unless thou die forthwith and overcome thy nature. Thou canst not enjoy peace unless thou make war upon thyself; this is the way to purchase true liberty. Be readier always to comply with another's will than thy own, and thou shalt not know what it is to be at jars: love rather to have little than much, and thou shalt have no occasion of complaint: choose always the meanest place, and to be every one's underling, and thou shalt scarce ever be sad; have a desire to suffer and undergo something for thy Jesus' sake, and thou shalt think nobody burdensome: seek God in all things that His will may be fulfilled in thee, and thou shalt never be disquieted. If thou ought to accommodate thyself rather to another's will than thy own, why not to the Divine will, and rejoice that it is fulfilled by thee? Keep these things in

thy heart that thou mayest enjoy an uninterrupted peace. True tranquillity of mind cannot be obtained but by a contempt of the world and conquest over ourselves. This may be done two manner of ways; either by forcing thyself contrary to what seems good and delectable in the world and nature; or by knowing them to be naught, and weighing all things in the balance of truth: this latter way is the sweeter and more permanent, although it must always be accompanied with a fervorous contradiction of our appetite. He nevertheless who in faith and spirit is convinced of the verity and vanity that is in things, shall with much facility overcome himself and despise the world.

Nothing conduceth more to a happy progress than to frame an unbiassed judgment of things, and to relish them according to the doctrine of Jesus. What hearest thou pronounced by that most holy mouth of Truth Itself? Blessed are the poor of spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are they that suffer persecution. Why wilt thou esteem those things harsh and burdensome which the Truth of God held and delivered for beatitudes? How canst thou avoid being deceived, if thou account those things evil which faith teaches us to be good, and to render us happy? We believe the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity because Christ revealed it to us; the same Jesus also revealed that these things which the world so much abhors, poverty, sorrow, injuries, are not bad but good; neither is He to be rather disbelieved in this point by him that knows He taught so, than when He teacheth the Unity and Trinity of Almighty God. Let us then make a true estimate of truth, and frame our dictamens point blank opposite to worldly maxims. O Eternal Truth, grant me grace that according to

Thy doctrine I may judge all temporal things mere lies, and those far from containing great good, which bring so much hurt. Grant me that I may not live in an error by prizing those things highly which I ought to have in hatred. If it be a matter of faith that poverty, humiliation, affliction, are not only good but beatifying, why do not I rather choose to have little than much, to be despised than praised, to be afflicted than swim in delights?

He that walks in faith and truth, accounting those things truly good which Christ judgeth such, ought to be so far from being contristated for any want or vexation, that he should covet them with his utmost desires, and rejoice in them, and abhor wholly, and not in part only, all things which the world loveth and embraceth, and admit and desire with his whole heart, with his whole soul, with all his strength, with all his mind, whatsoever Jesus loved and embraced. Like as worldlings, who follow, love, and seek with great earnestness those things which belong to the world, to wit, honours, fame, and the opinion of a great name upon earth, as the world teacheth and deceives them: so those that make a progress in spirit and truth do seriously follow, love, and ardently desire whatsoever is altogether opposite to these, that is, to be clad in the same livery and ensigns of contempt which the Lord of glory wore. Insomuch that if it could be done without any offence of the Divine Majesty and sin of their neighbour, they would suffer contumelies, false witness, affronts, and be thought and accounted fools (they giving nevertheless no occasion of it) because they desire to resemble and imitate in some manner the Son of God. For this purpose let thy chief aim and study be, to seek thy own greater abnegation and continual mortification as

much as thou canst in all things. Why wilt thou live in guile and deceit, making no reckoning of those things which God prized and honoured so highly, that He thought them worthy of His Best-Beloved and Only-Begotten Son.

Verily, although they were not ranked among good things, yet for this sole reason, that Jesus chose them for Himself, they are honoured sufficiently, and worthy to be sought by us with the whole extent of our heart; and for this sole cause, that He despised all worldly goods; though men have them in so great esteem, they are to be held base and infamous, and deservedly to be abhorred more than death itself. Jesus overcome with love of us, made choice of these things the world hateth and why shall not we for His sake at least accept them. What do I say, for love of Jesus?—we ought to do it for love of ourselves. He that loves his soul and his life, let him love to die even while he yet liveth. If thou lovest life, why wilt thou not rather love an eternal and happy one than this wretched and momentary? Whosoever loves anything as good to himself aims always at that which is more perfect; and by good consequence, he that loves life must not love a temporal but eternal life; who loves good things, must not love earthly, but heavenly goods: wherefore our very affection to things compels us to disaffect all worldly things. There is nobody that loves any good thing but he wisheth it perpetual; though the contrary be absurd, yet we always do it; for through our love to life and goods we suffer great detriment both of life and goods. Tell me, O thou wretched of the world, who art so forgetful of eternal life, whether thou dost despise these transitory things or love them? If thou despisest them, it must be for this reason,

because thou seekest after better; if thou lovest them, how much are greater things more worthy of love. However the case stands, it is convinced that we ought to love eternal things, which will accrue to us so much more copiously by how much the more we are impoverished, disesteemed, and afflicted for God. Notwithstanding all this, the sufferings of this life are in no degree proportionable to the future glory; for what is here but light and momentary, works in us an eternal poise of the same. Our provision for eternity may be prepared with much facility, and ought to be kept with all carefulness. Each one furnisheth most plentifully the place he intends for his longest abode; and where his residence is to be but for a short time, that he regards but slightly and provides it but superficially. An eternity expects us in the other life, we must lay up store of merits for it, lest we make our provisions preposterously, bestowing great care on a short abode, and little on a long.

But we ought to have transitory things in hatred not only in regard of the eternal life, but even in respect of this temporal; they disquiet and vex us with a thousand cares while we are procuring them, and with a thousand fears and frights lest we fall short of them: we brook any loss but impatiently; which happening so frequently as it does, we are tossed in a continual sea of grief, anger, and endless vexations. He alone who goes contrary to the world lives without contrariety and in holy repose. How then do these things deserve the name of goods which are so noisome and tormenting to us? Rather the quite opposite are to be styled such, which far sooner render us such, by putting us in mind of our present condition, by making us think upon God and have recourse to Him, by occa-

sioning our greater merit, and assimilating us to the Only-Begotten Son of God. The lover of men, Jesus, did most truly term those not only good but also beatifying. Yea, the choicest of the heathen philosophers held not those things, which the world so much adores, good, but their contrary. Some of them hated and rejected temporal riches, that at least in this life, void of care, and fear and perplexity of mind, they might enjoy a temporal felicity. It redounds to our great shame that heathens should do so, who wanted the example of the Son of God, who were out of hopes of other goods, and this when the world was in its youth and verdure, and abounded more with such allurements, though false and counterfeit. But we have the glory of imitating Jesus, and the incentive of a heavenly reward; the world moreover is now grown worse and more deformed, and wants not only solid goods but also fading. Now it scarce hath wherewithal to bait a deceitful hook; its false varnish is washed off, insomuch that it cannot deceive us, unless we deceive ourselves.

CHAPTER XII.

Of the excellency of one that is in the state of grace.

Why seekest thou anything of the world, if thou be above the world? Why lovest thou any earthly thing since thou art beloved of God? How can he stick in the mud of nature who is elevated to the state of grace? O good, as little understood as much neglected! God hath bestowed large and precious promises upon us to make us sharers of His Divine nature. Why seeks he anything besides God who hath found the grace of God, which raiseth him above all nature; yea, even that of the highest Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim, if theirs be considered in itself, though so far surpassing all other created substance; by which we have God for our Father, for our Friend, and inseparable Achates. It is counted a matter of high concernment among men to have precedency of place or dignity before others, and what will it then be to have a pre-eminence above all the degrees of nature? Although the world were never so estimable, and the things in it beyond our valuation, yet they ought to be contemned by one in the state of grace. The devil is intolerably proud, yet he regards not the opinions of men concerning him, nor deems himself one jot the worse for being reviled by them; he seeks not popular applause, he slights ma-

terial things, he loathes what we relish so savourly, he scoffs at our affairs, and all this for no other reason but because he is of a more sublime nature; why then is man, who is raised to a participation of God's nature, who is ranked in the highest class of creatures, so solicitous about these base trifles? Certainly if he understood thoroughly the dignity that is conferred upon him by being rightly confessed and put in the state of grace, nothing else would be requisite to make him contemn and deride these fopperies of creatures; nor were any great store of virtue needful to move him to this, but he would do it even by his corrupt nature, unless we should hold it impossible that grace could be the occasion of a misdeed. The wicked spirits without any virtue at all have a most mean conceit of these sublunary things; and why, but because they are of a superior nature and rank above them. What then ought man to do with virtue, who is elevated above all nature? If a great King in his robes of state should find a spade or sickle lying in the way, he would scorn to stoop to take it up, as being of a more eminent condition than a peasant; and why doth man, when he hath once possessed his soul of God's grace, stoop and debase himself to earthly things, since his dignity overtops the heavens?

Oh, how great is the excellency of grace! It lies concealed many times under a coarse and contemptible garment in a weak body, feeble and sometimes loathsome to the eye. Consider how much the noblest nature of a Seraph surpasseth the basest of a silly worm; yet there is not the meanest slave and ugliest leper, if he be in the state of grace, but doth much more exceed the nature of a higher Angel. If God should create a select nature in which all under-natures, vegetative, sensitive,

rational, and Angelical were comprehended, insomuch that these sublime intelligences of the world, Principalities, Dominations, Seraphim, were to acknowledge it of a superior order, as creatures did Adam, what height of dignity would such a one carry? But would it be decent, think you, that such a refined creature should sort himself with brute beasts, and in his carriage strive to become like them? O man, thou art exalted to a higher rank; while thou art in grace thou excellest not only all created natures, but also creable. How wouldst thou wonder if thou shouldst see a despicable worm in a dead dog become not only a glorious spirit, but equal even to the Seraphim: and why dost thou not admire as much thy own elevation from sin to a Divine state, which is far greater? Would a worm, become a spirit, covet to lodge in a rotten carcase? And why dost thou love perishable things, since thou art become after a wonderful manner and privilege a kind of God, and a child of the increated God, Who made thee by creation a man, and by redemption, Divine? Although thou seest not this dignity, thou must believe it, and frame a great conceit of thyself more groundedly than if thou beheldest it with thy eyes. If all the perfection, excellency, and beauty of all natures both existent and possible were all collected into one, it were all nothing in comparison of the least particle of grace, which gives a soul pre-eminence above all pre-eminences, and a beauty above all other beauties of nature. There is no resemblance betwixt God and all natural perfection; so he that is endowed with grace exceeds all the good that is found in creatures, for he is in a Divine degree.

Suppose when thou wert yet in the abyss of nothing and God was about to give thee a being,

that He demanded of thee in what class thou wouldst be created, whether a mere element, or a rock, or some piece of metal, or a brute beast, or a man, or an Angel, or one of the Seraphim, wouldst thou not account this a great benefit? Wouldst thou choose to be an insensible creature, or rather to be classed among the intelligible? Or peradventure durst thou hope and presume to aspire to the same Divine degree with God, surmounting all the fore-mentioned natures? Behold how God hath of His own accord granted thee what thou durst not so much as conceive in thought. He did not place thee among the forms of animated creatures, nor among the inanimate, nor among the unreasonable, but raised thee not only to the degree of reason and immateriality, but even to a certain Divine one. One man alone is more indebted to God for the least degree of grace, than all creatures besides, from the Seraphim to the sands of the sea, for the creation of all other natures. Thou art more indebted to God for making thee partake of His Nature by grace, than if he had made all created natures subordinate to thee, even from the Angels to the beasts of the field.

All creatures are distributed into their proper files: the lower mix not with the higher; inanimate things cannot attain to the perfection of the animate; living creatures fall short of the sensitive, the sensitive of the intellectual, and corporeal things of spiritual. The eye cannot know an Angel, they are of a different order: so nature cannot reach God in Himself, He exceeding all created substances in a higher degree of disproportion than spiritual things do sensitive. Nobody can operate after a Divine manner unless he be in a Divine state: wherefore to know God in Himself, and treat with

Him, it was requisite we should be elevated to a higher order above nature, and placed in a supernatural. And grace effects this, carrying man beyond the bounds of nature, and setting him in a deifical state and order, making him partaker of the Divine Nature, and by a wonderful manner and prerogative a kind of god. For man by grace partakes of God according to the highest degree of the Divine Nature, forasmuch as it exceeds all nature; not only as it is existent, living, knowing, but as it is God and above all being, life, sense, and understanding. He partakes of the Divine Essence inasmuch as it is above all essence; he partakes of the Divine Substance inasmuch as it is supersubstantial and superessential: therefore a man in the state of grace is above nature, above essence, and all substances. If this prerogative were granted to one Angel or soul alone, to be in the world and adorned with grace, though less than that wherewith an infant dying immediately after baptism is endowed, it would be looked upon as a stupendous miracle, and no creature but would adore it. O my soul, how canst thou but deem thyself worthy of veneration, if thou humbly suspect thyself to be in grace? Do not trouble thyself for things below thee, and indeed all things are below thee.

Notwithstanding, it is not the sole prerogative of grace to excel all nature, if we consider that it makes man a child dear to God. O Father, what a charity didst Thou bestow upon us, that we both are, and are styled, the sons of God? We receive the Spirit which adopts children, that justified by the grace of Christ we may be coheirs of Jesus, and Thy inheritors. Oh, that we could understand how great a dignity it is to become the sons of God! Men account it a great matter to be the allies or

retainers of an earthly King; why make they not greater account of being the sons and heirs of God? We are wont to glory in the pedigree of men defunct, of the descent of flesh and blood that ends in dust, in our earthly parentage; but why do we not glory in being in grace, in sharing the nature of God, and such a Divine filiation? One that is of the blood-royal even after divers generations is had in great esteem by the world; how much more ought He that is akin to God and allied to Him in the same nature?

A parent loves his child more affectionately than he doth another who is of the same complexion, of the same speech and features, because he partakes of the same nature: so God loves him who is in grace more tenderly than He doth the Angelical order, because he shares with Him in nature, though he be otherwise the most contemptible creature in the world. There is a larger difference betwixt the substance of a Cherub considered in itself, and one that is in grace, than there is betwixt a painted man and the living original; although each creature partake of God in some sort, yet there is a vast disparity. They partake of His Nature much after the manner of a picture. When a limner draws himself to life, the picture partakes of him by way of representation, in resemblance, in colour, in his lineaments, and all his exterior, but not in the degree of life and a rational soul. All natures are so many rude draughts and expressions of some Divine perfection, but without any part of the Divine Spirit. He alone that is in grace is a living image of God, quickened with His Spirit, and, as it were, the child and image of his Parent by participation and communication of Nature. What a deal of difference is there and how far falls a material

picture or statue of some King short of the King's own Beloved Son? The noblest essence and natural perfection of the highest Archangel falls much shorter of a soul that is in grace; for there is no substance or nature but it represents God only after a dead manner, no otherwise than an Emperor is represented by a piece of wood or marble or painted tablet. Among those that partake of the same nature there is not so much a similitude as an identity or self-sameness: and therefore the holy Fathers style one that is in grace the same with God, like as the father and the son in human generations are accounted the same person. The natural Son of God Himself said—"Let all be one, as Thou, O Father, in Me and I in Thee, that they may also be one in Us." For although each just man, besides the Just of justs, Jesus, becomes only such by adoption, there is a greater tie and unity betwixt Him and God than is found betwixt natural parents and their children. The children of men have only a small parcel of base matter and their parents' flesh, but he that is in the degree of grace receives the whole Divine Spirit within him. Therefore the adoptive filiation of God is a more sublime manner of filiation than that which is naturally found among men.

O man, rejoice in this thy dignity, and do not degenerate from the Divine condition thou art raised to: have a care of God's honour, be zealous in His quarrel, if not because He is thy God, at least because He is thy Father, and all that He hath shall be thine. Children, because they hope to inherit their father's patrimony, follow their father's business; thou, being heir to God, must not carry thyself like a stranger, or alien. Although God had not given us our creation, yet for this only that He

adopted us His children, we owe Him a cordial love, and must discharge our duty in things appertaining to His service with a great deal of zeal. O most loving Father, why am not I touched with a deep resentment for being enrolled into Thy family, and tasting so singularly of Thy Providence! Wild beasts out of love to their young ones expose themselves to a hazard of death; and what wilt Thou do, Who hast given such a remonstrance of love even for us who condemned Thy natural Son, as to take us for Thy children? Oh, what confidence ought a soul to have in this filiation! Although God were not a God of Providence, yet He would be watchfully careful and sweetly solicitous over him that is in grace, no less than a mother in widowhood over her only and beloved child; yea, far greater than this is God's affection and vigilancy in regard of the just.

To this we may add that by grace we become the friends of God. Jesus Himself uttered these words, sweeter than honey-drops, "Ye are My friends." For by grace there accrues a certain dignity betwixt God and man, not of a disproportional degree, but so dignifying that it elevates him to the order of things Divine, and of a mortal man makes him a friend and favourite of the Immortal King. Although we did not become the children of God, yet for this sole respect, that grace entitles us His beloved, its worth exceeds all valuation. A friend is preferred before a kinsman, and is held more trusty than nature itself: allies are often neglected or become the objects of hatred, friends are always beloved: men do more for their friend than for their brother: what then shall we conceive of friendship with God? There are two things which endear much, alliance and love; and both of them are

found in grace. To be loved by God is a rich mine of heavenly gold, and a magazine of all Divine blessings. The love of God is not loitering and sluggish, but most effectual and operative. To love one is to wish him well: in God it is the self-same to will and to do, and consequently whomsoever He loveth He enricheth him with the treasures of Heaven. The love of God is an ever-flowing conduit, or rather a river of celestial blessings. If He exposed His life for His enemies, what will He do for His friends? There is no incongruity or inconsequence to be found in God: wherefore if He did so much for those that hated Him, He will do incredible things for those that love Him, carrying a special Providence over them. If He have so much care of our enemies as to command us to love them, what will He have of His own friends? He loved us so affectionately when we were yet His foes, that He seemed to love us more than Himself; and if He did this when we were His enemies, will He do less when He both styles and accounts us His friends?

Thou wouldst be glad to have a friend as faithful to thee as Jonathan was to David; but all human fidelity is a mere toy, yea, to be accounted but treachery, in regard of that which God shows on thy behalf. Men hold it no small favour to be taken notice of by a terrene King, what will it be to be loved, and so affectionately loved by God? Wilt thou know, O my soul, how signally remarkable God's friendship and fidelity is? He is so enamoured upon His friends that He cannot endure to be separated from them. If His immensity were confined only to Heaven, He would relinquish it to come to one that is in grace; nor would He ever be from him, but would make Himself his constant

sojourner, that our society may be with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, by the mediation of the Holy Ghost, Who is diffused in our hearts. Deer and lambs and pigeons are sociable creatures, they willingly sort with one another, and love those whom they know to be of the same kind. God is sociable, the Son of God is a lamb, the Divine Spirit is tame and affable, It loves those that become Divine, affecting the fellowship of His nature, and as it were of the same feather with Him. If the most sacred Humanity of Christ took such complacence in any one as to be always present with him, what should we think of such a singular privilege? And why do we not admire that the Divinity never departs from the just man, but becomes his inseparable companion?—and not only dwells with him as his fellow-sojourner, but even in him, in whom He placeth His tabernacle much more willingly than in the sun.

What parent so loves his child, as with his goodwill never to be from him but always in his company? yea, such a one assigns him a tutor and commits him to his custody. But God, our Parent and Friend, intrusts us to nobody else, He will always be with us Himself. What mother loves her child so tenderly as that she will continually have him in her arms? Yet God doth this. Grace is a knot which ties God and man together; it is the sweet and mutual embracement of the spirit Divine and human. Among men the father may not be where the son is, but God cannot but be with him that is in grace. Although God be existent in creatures both by His Essence, Presence, and Power, this is so because He is God, and it cannot be otherwise, not for any dignity or desert in them, but by reason of His immensity and infinitude. But grace,

not nature, hath this attractiveness, that although God could be absent, and were limitable to locality, yet it would make Him present and existent with one in grace, residing with him, and becoming one spirit; yea, albeit He could forget His creatures, he would be always sweetly present to His memory and share of His Providence; although He could relinquish them, and not operate in them, nor converse and maintain them, yet He would still be working some good in the just: for as love is effectual, so it never intends any good but it completes it.

What a benefit and dignity is it to have God always for our companion? Certainly we should be struck with amazement to see any creature so beloved by God, and so noble, that He commanded His celestial spirits, those thousands of thousands that attend Him, to accompany it whithersoever it went, and be followed by all that train so stately and majestical: yet this would be but solitude in comparison of the fellowship and attendance of God. What are all things before Thee, O Lord, but as it were a mere nothing and vacuity? If we should admire such a creature, why do we not also admire a soul in grace, since it hath God for its attendance, not waiting at its elbow, but as it were in its essence enlivening it? O most fortunate dignity of man and dignation of God, to have that highest Majesty always accompanying the sons of men! for God will not be a lazy and unprofitable companion to a soul, not providing what is behooveful to it. Will He be like one that is sluggish or blind, who neither sees nor resents the necessities and miseries which press it? Certainly God doth not associate Himself to the just for nothing. They may well neglect both themselves and their own affairs, if only they be

careful of what concerns Him: He will have a care of them. O my Father, O Friend, O Companion! I beg of Thy Majesty that I may always carry a due reverence, fidelity, and affability towards Thee. I will demean myself to Thee as a child doth to his parent, taking all Thy affairs to heart, reputing them my own, not otherwise than towardly children are industriously careful of their parents' business, because they look upon it as their own. I beseech Thee, that I may be a faithful friend to Thee, seeking at all turns Thy greater honour and glory, advancing what concerns Thee, and loving Thee more than myself. Grant that I may keep with Thee all the rules of good fellowship, lest by my continual defects I may contristate Thy Holy Spirit.

But if all grace be of such virtue and efficacy in itself, that it makes us kinsmen and allies of God, most dear to Him, yea in a manner gods, and this because it is given by Christ; hence it follows that that portion of it which befalls man is more happy, more venerable and highlier privileged than that which was bestowed upon the Angels, or our first parents in the state of innocency. Those children are ordinarily first in their parents' affection, who were delivered into the world with the strongest throes of a hard labour: and what wonder then if our grace be dearer to Christ, since it cost Him so many sorrows, and He for it bestows on us greater privileges, affording us more helps, tolerating us more patiently and longanimously, raising us to great spiritual advancement, insomuch that the very Angels themselves do honour men for this respect, that they have grace by Christ, and they are struck with a reverential fear to see our nature now prostrate before them, which they slighted so much

before God became Incarnate by assuming it; and this, because a special dignity accrues to the grace we partake of, we being made thereby living members of Christ and computed the same with Him. There redounds a certain veneration from the Head to the members: how can the Angels despise our nature, which they admiringly behold exalted above theirs even to the throne of the Divinity and fellowship of God? What wonder if they treat us not as their inferiors, whom the Son of God, the first begotten among many brethren, under the title of equals, exalted above the celestial spirits themselves, calling men His brethren, and esteeming them more than Angels. He never honoured any of the Seraphim so much as to call him brother. This is the highest prerogative of grace which renders it so honourable and elevates it above all nature. Moreover, our nature itself, by grace through Christ, is dignified and exalted above all other natures, forasmuch as the Lord of glory communicates the same His glory with His jointly-united members and living allies. Our grace also is founded upon the merits of Jesus and His union, as if thereby it gave us a juster title to merit from God, and makes us do it after a perfect manner. For we are children of sorrow, we are God's Benjamins, the sons of His right hand, and dear above all others. O most loving Father, Who sacrificed Thy Only-Begotten Son to death, that I becoming Thy son might live, grant that I may always have a true esteem and knowledge of this inestimable benefit. One Angel is more indebted to Thee for the least degree of grace which he received than all creatures together for all the goods of nature and creation of the universe. But I, a silly wretched man, owe Thee more for the least particle of grace bestowed upon me, than all the Hierachies of Angels

for all the supernatural gifts conferred upon them all together. For to the end that I through grace might live a Divine life, Thou wouldst have Thy Son in human nature to suffer an inhuman death. Thou hast done more for me than for all the Angels; Thou hast heaped more obligations upon me than upon the Cherubim and Seraphim.

There are two reasons for which men are obliged to preserve and highly magnify Divine grace. The one is its inestimable worth and unspeakable dignity; the other is Thy most precious Blood, O Jesus, which Thou didst shed to merit grace. If we be not satisfied of its value in itself, this may thoroughly convince us, that Thou wouldst purchase it for us at so dear a rate. It must needs be a rare and stupendous thing, which God, Who cannot err in His choice, chose rather to give us than save the life of His own Son so precious to Him.

CHAPTER XIII.

How penances and corporal afflictions help us.

Thorns conserve plants in a garden and austerities grace in a just man. A fresh vigour of mind flourisheth many times in a tottering and withered body. That physicians may cure the body, they more and more afflict it by bitter potions, by abstinence, by breathing a vein, by searing it, and other ways yet more penal: if it be exacted of thee to afflict it in some sort for the good of thy soul, no great matter is demanded. He that is ill at ease, amidst his gripes and pains casts up what annoyed him: so the peccant humours of our soul are not purged by living pleasantly, since the maladies of our bodies are not cured without annoyance. A flint being beaten yields flashes of light, and the flesh by chastisements illuminates the mind. That soul shows itself a very beast, which treats not its body as a beast. Even as afflictions and crosses sent by God make men relent, think upon Him, indoctrinate them, enkindle fervour, increase familiarity with God, and raise their hearts: so voluntary austerities have like effect; they make a man have a more frequent recourse to God, and being void of sensible gust they dispose him better for Divine illustrations.

The curbing of nature is a fit disposition for increase of grace: this is the aim and endeavour of

grace to divorce us from temporal, corporeal, and visible things; and a penitential life finds this half done to its hand, supposing it be accompanied with Divine grace, without which nothing is beneficial to us, nothing profitable. The depth of our humiliation together with bodily austerity is the throne and kingdom of grace, and a step to glory; and the crucifying of our flesh, the exalting of the spirit. Thou armest thyself with voluntary afflictions against necessary ones, learning thus in the school of patience how thou art to embrace those which are sent thee from God. By these skirmishes thou art taught to overcome thyself, and consequently disable thy greatest antagonist by whom the rest assail thee; thou also findest a more speedy redress at the hands of God in thy addresses to Him. Although Christ crucified be a sufficient warrant for our penitential austerities, yet we might specify many more, and principally our innumerable defaults and penalties due for them, that we may make amends for what is past, and lessen future misdemeanours. Thy soul must be the executioner of thy flesh; for this end through the great mercy of God, it is reprieved and rescued from the pains of hell-fire. Sometimes it happens that of two criminals sentenced to death, the one partner is quitted upon this condition, that he execute the sentence of death upon his companion, becoming his hangman for want of another. Our soul and body are joint-sharers in sin, let the soul be the executioner of Divine justice over the body, and punish it in a due manner, she when she first sinned being reprieved from eternal damnation.

Suffer nothing to pass unpunished: make thyself formidable to thyself, as one that can be cruel against thyself, a most impartial and severe chas-

tiser of all the delinquencies and soothings of the flesh; all must undergo their due penalty. There is no city well governed, unless its penal laws be in force and vigour; nor can that conscience be well ordered where so many depraved affections are on foot without its court and sword of justice. The punishment thou inflictest on thyself must be corresponding to thy fault: beware God call thee not to an account for contemning and corrupting justice. Take vengeance on thyself, both because thou pleadest guilty, and hast played the naughty judge in acquitting thyself so often by being indulgent to thyself. Justice is exercised in cities rather to terrify others by such an example from offending, than to lessen the guilt and punishment of him that is nocent; but thou reapest more ample fruit by chastising thyself; thou shalt not only henceforth deter others from offending, but thyself, that thou mayest not commit new ones, and diminish the punishment due for the committed. Thy severity is not a piece of justice, but indulgence; for man's revenge works God's pardon. Yet in all thy proceedings be mindful how praiseworthy is obedience, and how profitable discretion, lest thou practise austerity unadvisedly, with decrease of thy own profit, and less increase of God's honour and service, for the devil is ready to catch at all turns. Nevertheless be careful above all and at all times, rather to chastise thy will than thy body. But as far as a prudent circumspection divested of self-love, and the advice of thy superior with regard to each one's age, condition, strength, inclination, employment, and necessity shall permit such austerities, thou must without mercy and self-flattery not be sparing in inflicting them.

O merciful Truth, how can I flatter and pamper

myself, if I call to mind the hardship and torments which my most innocent Jesus suffered for my sins, and the pains that are endured by the souls in Purgatory. It would be accounted a huge privilege if God should permit a soul in those scorching flames to redeem its sufferings, as we now may, by undergoing voluntary afflictions. Let us now make use of this His indulgence. If a creditor should remit to one a debt of a hundred talents upon this condition, if within a prefixed time he paid him only one, would he, think you, refuse so gainful a bargain? What a madness is it in us to choose rather to pay a hundred in the other life than one in this? But what need of remission of these terrifical pains? the gracefulness and beauty which accrues to our flesh in the life to come is a sufficient incentive.

Remember how glorious and seemly our bodies will be in the future resurrection, which shall share of comeliness and splendour according to the rate and proportion of their now present sufferances. The robes which are to vest them in eternity are woven by the home-spun and temporal afflictions of this life. Some, not to appear deformed to the eyes of men, have suffered their limbs and bones to be cut and racked half the term of their short life: eternal beauty is purchased at a far easier rate; it is not required that we cut them, but only that we do not pamper them, and a little vex and annoy them. Our holy Patriarch St. Ignatius understood this excellently well; who, being not as yet converted to Almighty God, to avoid deformity commanded a bone to be cut out, enduring the pain without a tear, without a sigh, without the least sign of grief or torture; but after his conversion he judged it an act far more heroical, upon consideration of a future comeliness that is to invest us in

the resurrection, to undergo austerities, to fast for whole weeks together, to discipline himself thrice a day, to make prolix genuflections, lying on the bare ground, wearing a rough hair shirt, clad in sack-cloth, going barefoot, treating his body in the harshest manner he could both for apparel and rigour of fare. The austerities also of barbarous heathens destitute of our hopes may make us blush at our own tepidity: they wore shirts of iron, which gored their bodies on all sides with sharp pricks; they stretched themselves upon tenter-hooks, singing the whilst hymns in praise of their god; they cast themselves under the wheels of the chariots which carried their idols, and suffered themselves to be bruised to pieces; they abstained from meat for many days together. Let it confound us, that superstition is more powerful than religion, and the phantasticalness of men than the love of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

That too much love of our flesh hinders the spirit.

If our flesh, although it be born with us, and the blood which enlivens us, be such domestic enemies as to hinder the life of our spirit, can flesh that is only allied and consanguinity much avail? The spirit ought to blush at the name of alliance; how much more at the allies of a fond and disordinate love? If the flesh be ashamed of its kindred of the same flesh, if it disclaim from obscure kinsfolks and progenitors, how much more ought the spirit to be ashamed of all flesh and blood, and such like affinity? The soul ought to renounce her own flesh which she animates, and why doth she disordinately love another's, and that void of life, which served others, and perchance serves now only for food and lodging for worms. The nobleness of grace and our alliance with Christ should in all reason be forcible enough to make us forget and blush at our nature, without needing the incentives of its baseness, corruption, and loss of allies.

O Divine Truth, Thou commandest me to hate my kindred that I may become Thy disciple. If I love them more than Thee, how shall I become Thy spirit, adhering to Thee, one spirit with Thee? Grant me by Thy Blood that I may not love my blood but in Thine: let the Blood of Christ obtain so much at our hands, that we love not too much the

blood of sinful men. Christ by His Sacred Blood would redeem us, and become our ally by blood; for He was not ignorant of the taintures and defects of our blood and our allies by blood, and therefore vouchsafed a reparation.

The spirit is not bound to follow the laws and dictamens of the flesh. See, then, O my soul, that nearness of blood do not taint thy love. God commands thee to hate thyself and thy own flesh and blood, how canst thou then love thy friends and kinsfolks otherwise than for God, and according to the prescript of virtue? Thou mightest with as much reason love gnats or flies as thy allies, which nevertheless thou seekest to destroy. Worms are engendered by carnal parents equally with thy brethren; why abhorrest thou them with such a loathing of stomach more than all, and lovest thy kindred with such affection of heart more than God? If the ground of this extraordinary love beyond the dictamens of virtue be, for that they are engendered of the same parents: worms have more from them than thy brethren, for they gave not these their soul, nor are they totally produced by them as the others are. Hence kinsfolks and parents love and regard only the bodies of their kindred, being little solicitous for what concerns the good of their soul, it being God's handiwork, not theirs. Yea, neither didst thou receive thy body from thy parents, but by them from God. What? lovest thou thy allies because they are parts of thy common progenitors? By the same reason thou oughtest to love any of their dissevered members, yea, though infected with a loathsome canker. If thou lovest them for resemblance sake, by the same consequence thou mightest love their statue or any other ordinary man.

What is it to descend from the same family, but only to have drawn a little stenchy matter and corruption out of the same stinking foundation, and, what is worse, sin also? Can two with any reason boast because they fell together into the same puddle, and were bemired with the same dirt? Thy parent begot nasty worms of a purer nature than thee, they being void of sin, and thou stained with the filth of original; neither wert thou sooner partaker of life than guilty of death. He that vainly glories in the nobility of his carnal pedigree, seeks to entitle to honour the disgrace of common nature. What else is disordinate affection to kindred but a vaunting of that common baseness which we should be ashamed of, and a complacence in the ignominy of sin. The viciousness of our nature takes growth and increase by flesh and blood, and our misery prospers and gains ground; thence the flesh is maximed in principles wholly repugnant to the spirit. Our soul no sooner begins to be, but by means of the flesh it is infected with sin, and the contagiousness spreading still more and more, it is the prime cause of all our sinful mortalities. We must renounce both blood and kindred, that we may be freed from this death of sin, by the Cross of Christ which we must carry. We shall not meet with such harsh encounters as many children and youths have done, who by virtue of His Cross trampled under foot all flesh and blood. St. John Gotto, a Japonian of our society, at the place of his martyrdom, beholding at an equal distance, on the one hand the tears and sighs and sweet embracements of his weeping parents, and on the other crosses and gibbets and bloody executioners, nothing dismayed with such ensigns of cruelty, chose rather to cast himself into the arms of the Cross than those of his kindred; and slighting courageously

all their enticing allurements, ran to that which stood prepared for him, where dying he purchased the kingdom of God, which is not bought by flesh and blood.

CHAPTER XV.

Of the loss of temporal things.

The spirit is not much troubled at the loss of temporalities, for which it hath more reason to rejoice. One that lies groaning under a heavy weight, would he lament if a friend should remove it? That which is to be taken away, it is much better that God take it than death. If divested of all, thou be pleasing to God and He pleased with thee, to what purpose seekest thou by the access of creatures and cares to become grateful to Him? Let Himself alone content thee without His gifts and the assurances of temporal commodities. God loves not what is thine, but thee; do not thou love so much what is God's as God Himself. Christ, despoiled of all, mounted the Cross; despoiled of all He came out of His sepulchre; there He left His shroud behind Him; naked also He took the City of Heaven and entered it triumphant. For love of thee who art naked, He died naked, not for love of thy goods and fortunes; therefore He seeks thee, not them; and because He seeks thee, He takes these things from thee, expecting thee naked in Heaven. He prepares thee for His espousals while He disposeth of what is thine, and despoils thee of all. Why art thou afraid to become poor, if thou canst carry a kingdom in thy heart? The Kingdom of God is within you, O ridiculous cause of tears which takes away the

causes of sin! It is a high piece of impudence against God to grieve and lament at the loss of temporal things, which we ought to have in hatred. A woman, though never so much a harlot, hides the grief and tears which she sheds for the losses and injuries of the adulterer, she conceals also the joy she takes in his presence: thou even to God's face rejoicest in the prosperity of those things with which thou playest the naught; thou art sorry for their loss, and darest ask of Him either that He take them not away, or else restore them. What woman surprised in adultery durst beg of her husband that he would not interrupt that unlawful pleasure, when she should rather beg pardon for the offence? Her husband would deal mercifully with her if he only took away the adulterer; and how shameless art thou who deemest it an injury? What wife could be so impudent as to say to her husband, bring me that blackamoor that I may enjoy his embracements, for I like him better than thee: and thou darest to be so frontless as to make God the pander of thy disorderly concupiscence by begging temporal things of Him. When thou askest anything of God besides God, thy very prayer betrays thy adulterous spirit: for it is the self-same as if thou shouldst say, Give me, O Lord, something wherewith to offend Thee. It is bad enough to play the fornicator to His dishonour, without begging of Him the increase of that store, by Whose fruition thou undoest thyself; and such is the preservation of riches, honours, gusts, colours, and corporeal beauties.

He that were pestered with a loathsome cancer would not be offended with the chirurgeon for lancing the infected part, but of his own accord would proffer it to be cut off, though with grief

and horror; but if perchance waking out of his sleep he should find it done to his hand imperceptibly, and without any concurrence of his own, he would esteem it a miraculous cure, and render thanks for it to God as such. Thou art not deprived of thy joints and limbs but hurtful darts which poison thy heart; give God thanks that this privation is made insensibly and without detriment to thy patience. Thou who shouldst relinquish all, do not grieve at the loss of some. To make them a matter of merit, thou shouldst give them to the poor; if God take them, why takest thou it not patiently? Gerson spoke piously when he said—

> If Thou, O Father, re-demand what's lent,
> Take, I restore most freely what's unspent;
> Wilt Thou by thieves, by sword, by fire it take,
> All's one to me, I quit it for Thy sake.
> Perchance even so more grateful it will be,
> Than if in alms the poor had it from me.

If having nothing thou have all, why art thou troubled and vexed? O amiable Truth, invert my perverse heart, and work so in it that henceforth it may be noisome to me to have anything besides Thee: disburden me of all earthly things, and first of all of myself, who am the heaviest burden to myself. I will not, O Lord, have myself, that I may have Thee. If many philosophers deprived themselves of all these goods for love of themselves, because they held them base, and great hindrances to their course of life; what do I, who for love of Thee repine to be deprived but of some?

O feeble spirit, why grievest thou to be circumcised in a few superfluous things, since indeed a few only are necessary. What do I say, a few? Nothing but God is necessary to me. I congratulate with myself, God is my sufficiency, Who knows

no deficiency. I knew not, O sweet Truth, what a comfortable thing it was to have nothing; yea, to know more clearly than the sunshine, that it is altogether impossible, although I endeavoured it ever so much, to have anything besides God, which can be mine and not God's alone. But because all things are His, and He mine, all things are mine, and then most mine when I have them least, because they have me least, and I have them better in God than if I had them in themselves. If I were truly humble, I should not grieve at the loss of temporal things. He that is to esteem himself nothing, how can he esteem other things something, which are baser than himself. When one dies, all things die to him: so he that deems himself nothing, deems the whole world nothing. All things are dead to one that is dead, and all contemptible to one truly humble.

CHAPTER XVI.

How profitable temptations are.

How canst thou expect to be crowned if thou dost not combat? and how wilt thou combat, if thou be not assaulted and tempted? Without an enemy there is no combat, and without a combat there is no victory. Nay, it were disgraceful, and little to our credit, to be crowned without fighting, to triumph without a victory, and challenge or usurp an honour not due to us; therefore do not take it ill that thou art vexed with temptations, for there is the store-house of merit, and occasion of humbling thyself. God hath permitted many to fall into grievous sins that they might become humble. He dealt more mercifully with thee, permitting thee only to be tempted. Resist valiantly in God's quarrel; although it be troublesome enough in the very conflict and assault of temptations to fight and make resistance, yet the victory over it is more delectable than the pleasure of the sin to which it draws thee. Thou must not compare the sweetness of the sin with the noisomeness of the temptation, but with the joy that ariseth from the victory; nor the combat with the pleasure, but the fruit of the victory with the practice of the vice. Try a little what it is to overcome temptations, who hast tried so often what it is to be overcome by them.

When thou prevailest, think that ere long thou art

to fight again; when thou fightest, think that in that victory the enemy is to be totally routed, and thou to enjoy an eternal peace. Perchance in part it will so fall out, for the devil put to confusion and flight will not dare to assail thee again, and God will give thee some truce, as He knows it expedient for thy good. He Who permitted it for thy advantage, knows at what time it is best to free thee. An artificer takes not gold out of the furnace till it be purged sufficiently: and if thou be not purified enough and improved, He will not free thee from that molestation. In time of victory be mindful of the combat; in time of the combat, of victory. Thou shalt be in perpetual joy if thou overcome, in perpetual shame if overcome. Why dost thou misprize the secure joy and integrity of a good conscience for a vain and momentary delight? All the time of this life is lost which is not spent in suffering. Do not refuse the trouble of resisting, since thou must not expect, so long as thou livest here, to be without some trouble. What manner of life soever thou embracest still must thou undergo some affliction; choose then to be afflicted for virtue. No place is exempted from all annoyancs and contrariety; but it is a happy one and easy to be borne, which is undergone for the purchase of eternal happiness. Even for human ends we sustain a longer conflict with greater expense of labour and less fruit. The term of our temporal labours concludes in a new labour, and that many times an eternal one; but this other, as light and short as it is, works in thee an everlasting poise of glory, to which all the sufferings of this time bear no proportion at all. At leastwise take this tribulation not repiningly, which thou oughtest to wish for out of a thirst of greater glory, which will increase when it is

watered with that fire. Yea, although no reward were allotted for it, it is enough that thereby thou art more conformable to the example of Christ. Great necessity forceth thee to fight valiantly and make resistance: thou art under the eyes of thy Judge, and maintainest a quarrel in which His honour lies at stake, the Saints and Angels being spectators. Thou must resolve rather to die a thousand deaths than once be vanquished and put to the shame of suffering a foil. How darest thou commit adultery in the presence of thy Spouse, the Hierachies of Angels looking on, and Choirs of Saints being eye-witnesses of such disloyalty.

It cannot be, but that thou must often be annoyed and tempted in this life; wherefore look well to thyself and stand upon thy guard: although thou hast built in thyself a castle never so strong, and fenced it with the ramparts of all virtues, expect temptations, because it is founded upon thy own nature, together with the weak and frail infirmity of thy flesh. What avails it to the security of a house that its walls are strong and made of stone, if it have a ruinous foundation? What imports it that thou art armed from head to foot, if thou stand upon slippery ground, or ride upon a boggling, unruly, and headstrong horse? Well mayest thou furnish thyself with virtues; but still thou art environed with flesh, which is more dangerous than a resty and untractable jade, and more unstable than sand, unless it be solidated in the grace of God. Wherefore the most universal remedy and effectualest antidote against temptations, is to despoil thyself of thy nature, as much as thou canst, with its appetites; to extirpate all self-seeking interests, and become sincere and untainted with the least blemish of thy own will: for every one is tempted by his own

concupiscence. When we seek temptation we shall find it. He that seeks himself will find himself: and what wilt thou find in thyself, who art so wretched, but wretchedness, trouble, and affliction?

CHAPTER XVII.

That we must fear God and hope in Him.

Our enemy lays his snares on all sides; there is no part of our life free from danger, but the greatest of all is our own security, for that compriseth all dangers. Who can be secure in the midst of his enemies, or when they border upon him, and chiefly a domestic enemy? How canst thou be secure, since thou art thy own foe, and hast all the world opposite to thee, and all the devils at a deadly feud with thee? If ten men should come against one, if twice as great an army assail a General, he would fear were he never so valiant; and why art not thou afraid, since no less than the whole world is an enemy to thee, and fights against thee?

Thou must also fear God, both because thou hast offended Him, and mayest offend Him hereafter. What woman taken in adultery, if her husband let no word of pardon fall, could choose but be in fear and suspense? Thou also must be so, for thou knowest evidently that thou hast sinned, but thou hast no evidence or revelation that it is pardoned; neither shouldst thou covet to have, because an humble fear and solicitude will benefit thee more than such a favour from Heaven, For as those that fear are wont to be thirsty, so a holy fear of God will procure a thirst and more earnest desire of

pleasing and serving Him in all things. But if thou hast not sinned, or wert by some revelation from God ascertained of pardon, yet for all that cease not to fear. Some after they have wrought many miracles, and led a most holy and austere life for divers years in the wilderness have miscarried miserably. The Angels in Heaven, Adam in Paradise, Saul and Judas, who were chosen by God before many others, suffered at length a lamentable shipwreck. Heron after he was arrived to a high pitch of perfection and eminent virtue; after labours, sweats, abstinences, and many other prodigious things (for he eat but once in three months' space, and then only a wood-salad, refraining in the interim from all food besides the most sacred Body of Christ our Lord,) falling lamentably, he haunted taverns, becoming first a drunkard, and afterwards luxurious. Thou art in the vale of sinners, nor wilt thou pretend that thou art elected by God, nor art thou conscious to thyself of so rare sanctity, but on the contrary that thou art a sinner; how then art thou not afraid of thyself, why dost thou not stand in dread of God? The Angels and Seraphim do tremble, though they know themselves secure both from sin and from damnation, because they see a possibility of some creatures being damned; why dost not thou tremble since thy damnation is also possible?

God permits many great Saints to fall, to teach thee that all proceeds from Him, and that we must not presume and confide in our own merits and diligence, but in Him alone. Thou hast no reason to rely upon thyself, although thy merits be not inferior to those of St. John Baptist, but on God thou mayest, though as desperately wicked as Antichrist; and how frequent and enormous soever thy

misdemeanours are, thou hast no reason at all to despair or be dejected, but must trust so much the more in God, by how much thou hast less reason to trust in thyself. This is true Divine hope, when a man confides not at all in himself; the more he fears God, the more he will trust in Him. St. Prosper said very well—

> He that from fears himself will free,
> God must his sanctuary be.

How much more just any one is, and how much more enamoured upon God, so much more anxious is he with fear, for he knows how much He deserves to be loved and reverenced; insomuch as a man ought to wish and beg to be in torments through all eternity, that so he might in some sort be thankful to Him for so great goodness; but because the multiplicity of his defects makes him fall far short of such desires, he is seized with no small fear, he not doing what he ought and might do, and for that reason he is afraid lest he lose God, which renders him so much more anxious, by how much he knows Him more worthy of love.

Nevertheless, the anchor of his hope must be cast in Him that created him, as well in great as little fluctuations of the mind. Our confidence for the most part fails in this, that in great affairs it flies to God, as if in small ones we were able to do somewhat of ourselves. As well in petty as weighty matters we must place our sole hope in Him, because we are wholly impotent of ourselves to do any good. Some falter because they can hope for mean things, but dare not extend it to greater, either because they hold themselves unworthy, or else for that they frame too mean a conceit of God's excellency and the merits of Jesus. What makes

thee doubt or be dismayed in the pursuit of virtue and eminent sanctity, as if grace were to be obtained by thy own strength and deserts, or God were of an envious, or covetous, or needy disposition? The arm of God, and not thy forces, enable thee to follow virtue. God is benevolent, He envies not thy good. His Divine riches are so privileged, that to be liberal it is not required that He should be good and a lover of us; He loseth nothing when He gives, He impoverisheth not His exchequer and revenue, He doth not lessen His stock but augments it. If any man had a treasure of that nature, were he never so miserly and hide-bound, he would not deny what was asked; but the more covetous he were, the more bountiful would he be, and would take it for an affront if a trifle were demanded. Who is so ill-natured as to deny light, although he had never seen one ask it before? and why? because by giving it he loseth nothing, his light remaining as entirely to himself as formerly. Why shall not we without presumption expect such a liberality from the Father of Lights, from Whom each best gift descends? We injure the Divinity, by not hoping from so good a God and our Father what one might hope from the worst of men, though a barbarian unknown to us. Do not doubt of obtaining thy request, He hath promised far more than thou requirest. Do not mistrust His promise, He hath done stranger things than He promised. He promised thee His Kingdom, but He became a servant for thee; He promised that thou shouldst live with Him, but He suffered death for thy sake. It is more wonderful that God died and became a servant than that man should live and reign in glory. Now then we have a pledge, which is an assured one. Wherefore sometimes thou dost not

so much purely trust in God as tacitly presume of thyself, when thy hope pitcheth but upon some things, and those not great nor all. Of thyself thou art as impotent in order to small things as great, but in God equally powerful to both.

O Lord, how fondly proceeds he who hopes not great matters from Thee? For what in respect of man is but hope, in respect of Thee is wish and desire. If one, O my soul, should desire thee to do a thing, and again and again entreat thee, and offer his assistance, and for that end, out of the ardour of his desire should expose his life to manifest danger; if thou at length hadst a mind to do it, and now nothing were wanting but his concurrence, who had so long and earnestly sought and laboured it, wouldst thou not go to him with an assured confidence of having redress, and beg his assistance, especially if he had before promised it. This is our case with God, Whom thou must importune with winning entreaties, and a full confidence of relief. On His side there is no cause of fearing a repulse. How can it be that He will deny what He so earnestly desires should be asked. Dost thou expect to be heard, God expects that you cry to Him. Fear Him alone, because of thyself thou never art secure in this life, so beset with dangers. Although one lead never so holy and virtuous a life, he shall not want entrapments; for the devil impugns such with greater spleen and malice, because their manner of life is so very conspicuous. A thief will rather steal pearls and precious stones than pebbles or flints. God permits these dangers for our exercise of humility; for this life being most precious, He will have it most humble. He permits us to be so many ways assaulted, that we may still have dependence on Him, and so be most safe when we

think ourselves least safe, and remain so still by trusting in Him, if we never venture to presume of ourselves. In this manner dangers render our life secure. Thus by fearing only God, thou quittest thyself of all fear; and if thou fearest Him only, thou shalt more confidently hope all things from Him. Hope and fear of God are two admirable companions: they extremely help one another, and you must never forsake them. They will help thee not a little, if in thee they help themselves; for one without the other will little avail either thee or itself, yea, oftentimes proves very prejudicial.

CHAPTER XVIII.

That we cannot but suffer something, and of the good of patience.

He that cannot avoid suffering must seek to furnish himself with patience. Why do we not fortify ourselves with this most powerful virtue, since it is impossible not to suffer something in this world, God wonderfully disposing it so. He that hopes to avoid the troubles of this life, presumes to countermine the Divine Providence; it is so ordered, so decreed, and all for our good. God cannot be deceived in His appointments, nor frustrated in His disposals. The occasion of our suffering is born with us, because we are born with sin; nor will it be removed till we be taken out of this place of sinning. God could have placed us in Heaven without any more ado to Himself for us, at the first cast, as they say, without the long circumference of this miserable life; He could with the same facility

produce bread that He doth the ear and wheat, but that man might take pains and suffer somewhat, He so ordered that bread must necessarily be made of corn. He would have labours be precedent to glory, that He might honour us the more, and heap upon us the boons of His liberality, by making them as it were a due debt. Oh, the gracious proceeding of God, that He would become our debtor! He that covets to be ranked among the predestinate let him not refuse to suffer, it being the mark and cognizance of the elect, if embraced with patience. It was truly said by one, that it was a wonder all the stones, under the feet of those who are to be damned, are not turned into roses, so to mitigate the miseries they are to suffer; but, on the contrary, it is more to be wondered that, under the feet of those who are to be saved, they are not changed into thorns; and, leaping from thence upon their heads, do not punish them for their offences, such unspeakable fruit shall they reap of their so short labour.

What is the reason, since Christ's redemption is most copious, that it took away sin, and would not also take away those annoyances which in this life arise from sin, but because afflictions are beneficially salutiferous? How should we ever aspire to eternal life, if this momentary were pleasant and easeful, since we now love it, though full of miseries, and conceive but remiss desires of the other's beatitude. That blessed and elevated man, Father Baltazar Alvarez, said very well, that tribulations are so many winged horses to carry us a main pace towards Heaven. How much the more we debar our senses of their delights by suffering, sorrowing, or sickness, so much the more are we forced to fly to God, and seek true goods in Heaven. The tops

of trees, if the under branches be cut away, rear themselves much higher; and our mind, by depressing and keeping sense under, flourisheth and taketh better growth. After the lapse of Adam, God found out the rare invention of suffering, a heavenly device against sin. An invention worthy of God was labour and affliction, that we might be in our body as if we were bodiless, and by that means our relish might be the purer, our mind being disaffected to sense and the pleasures of the flesh, that by suffering it might be preserved from all contagion by its passions and desires. It is a heavenly device to supply the commodity and prerogative of death, that we may not be taken with these fading and sensible things. Patience was extolled by the philosophers, because they esteemed suffering which it mitigates an evil; but because suffering is an extreme good, therefore I say that patience is good, it making us not shun, but persist in what is good.

God is neither ignorant nor unwise (far be such a blasphemy from us), but the refinedest wisdom; nevertheless He chose afflictions for His best-beloved Son, He chose them for His Mother; for the Apostles, companions of His Son, and others His friends. That zealous and devout Father, Christopher Rodriguez, was wont to say, that he would have nobody to compassionate him in his sorrows and sufferings, but rather congratulate and jointly with him give thanks to God; for as one friend shakes hands with another and pressingly wrings them in token of friendship till they ache again; so God with His hand presseth His friends' and wrings them, which is an argument of signal love. Punishments many times are greater tokens of benevolence than gifts and benefits, because in that case the punishments themselves are the greatest

favours and most beneficial. Reprehension and chastisement is a more pregnant sign of charity than indulgence and cockering. One benevolous to foreigners and aliens will be found more easily than a reprover and rebuker, but chastisement is only used towards friends and domestics. Indulgence and liberality extend themselves even to enemies, correction only to children and familiars: wherefore the punishments of this life are surer pledges of love than the favours of fortune.

Tribulations are not always the penalty of delinquency: although no fault precede they are good: and do thou bear them patiently, whether they be inflicted immediately by God, or by men, and take them so much more joyfully, by how much less thou seemest to have deserved them, Even as we ought to rejoice much more if God afflict us, and not for our sins; so ought we also to be more patient and joyful when we are persecuted, slandered and reviled by men, if we be conscious of our own innocency, and that we suffer without desert. What cross wouldst thou rather choose, and with whom to die —with the thieves on theirs, or with Christ on His? The thieves' crosses had their merits, they were punished for their sins; but the Cross of Christ was a Cross of innocency, it was not erected for delinquency, that were horrid blasphemy; therefore thou must glory in no cross but that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our nature fell, and in its fall its rectitude and uprightness; it must be repaired, renewed and rectified, by hard and heavy duties. The hammer is hard and heavy, but it moulds and fashions pieces of plate, which it makes beautiful to the eye, and rectifies what was crooked and amiss.

Tribulation carries a kind of Divine authority along with it, insomuch that the Holy Ghost

breathes more effectually many times by it than by the Prophets and Holy Scriptures. We are sometimes refractory to the Word of God, and the good admonitions of the holy Fathers and Doctors; but tribulations, I know not how, make God when He speaks be so applauded, that without any more ado we yield and obey. He that desires to be heard speaking by knocking with his fist, or making a noise with his hands, bids silence and gains his auditory: so God striking with His, makes us attentive to what He says. Pharao resisted Him speaking by His servant Moses; he became pliable and obedient when He afflicted him by any contemptible creature. The people would not hearken to Jeremias till captivity at length made them relent. Nobody is deaf or obstinate to tribulation; it is God's eloquence and the Chair of the Holy Ghost, it is a sacred thing, and as it were the altar and throne of God, although harsh and repugnant to flesh and blood. Oh, how awful and terrible is that place! but in very deed it is no other than the house of God and gate of Heaven, the sanctuary of virtues, whither we fly from vice as into a sacred place of refuge.

Go then, O soul dear to Christ, fly not affliction as if it were venomous; it cannot hurt thee; thy Jesus hath already tasted it; it is neither evil or untoothsome when God is there to season it. How can the bitterness of a drop of gall be perceived in an ocean of honey? Whatsoever God sends, nor howsoever He dispose of me, I shall never want this comfort, that it is pleasing to Him. Let this be a solid comfort to thee, and yet if thou suffer without comfort do not shun it. Let it confound us that we love God less than dogs do their masters. Although a dog be chid away, although beaten,

although stoned, yet he cannot be kept off, but comes more and more; he follows him, he fawns upon him: so must we serve and approach to God, by how much the more we are beaten and afflicted; for if these should cease, our chief occasion of meriting would cease, nor could we give a sufficient proof that we truly love Him, and not serve Him as mere hirelings.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of diligence in prayer.

I AM not worthy, O most sweet-natured God, Who being ineffable art more affable that any, I am not worthy to be the object of Thy eyes. How wouldst Thou have me appear in Thy Presence and speak to Thee, O humble Majesty, Who disdainest not the speeches and prayers of men, yea, desirest and exhortest us to pray without intermission! and such is man's clownishness that he loathes Thee and Thy conversation, and makes no other esteem of Thee, the Lover of souls, than one would do of a deadly enemy. What is the first affront one puts upon his enemy, but to deny him speech? And we, O sweetest Truth, will not converse with Thee, because we love not truth; for what else would men do if Thou hated them, but what they now do, when Thou most tenderly lovest them? As one enemy asks not advice of another concerning his affairs and dangers, though he be held never so wise; so men in the midst of perils and nonplus of redress will not seek to be advised by Thee, giving no ear to Thy oracles and instructions, with which

Thou dost furnish us in time of prayer. Passionate men choose rather to perish than beg relief for their want of their mortal enemy, that they may not be forced to speak to him: and such an obstinate malapertness do they use towards Thee, O affable ineffability! They are often pressed with want, they are afflicted, they perish, because they demand not redress of Thee, nor will speak to Thee. What greater sign of enmity, than that two living in the same house will not speak to one another? Man lies if he says he loves God and does not speak to Him, residing in him. Dumb friendship is not distinguished from hatred.

God from all eternity, O ungrateful spirit, cast His thoughts upon thee and thine; it is but good reason that we in this short term of life consider His Divine beauty, and approach Him Who would be so near to us, that He united Himself to our nature and lodgeth so often in our breast; and that He might not depart from us, when He ascended to His Father, He invented that artificial master-piece of His Divine Sacrament, that He might still remain with us. But our impudence and recklessness found also out a way that when we come to God by prayer even then we leave Him and become absent, by letting our thoughts wander abroad and busy themselves with distractions. We procure to be estranged from Him, that when He comes to us in His most amiable Sacrament we fly to the vain thoughts of other affairs, and having entertained such a Guest, we quit the room and appear no more.

But if, O man, thou carry not this reverential respect to God, have at least commiseration upon thyself; let thy own necessity persuade thee to a love of prayer, if love of God force it not. Thou art nothing but ignorance, nothing but indigency;

in prayer alone wilt thou both grow rich and wise; in prayer God will open thy eyes to the discovery of wisdom, and thy hands to receive relief for thy neediness. Our prayers are as pleasing to God, as it is pleasing to Him to give, and it is most pleasing of all, the fruits of His beneficial nature. God did not create the world out of avarice, that He might have more than He had; but out of munificence, that He might have to whom to give; for this reason He created all things, that He might have both to whom and what to give. But because we have made ourselves unworthy of His liberality, the end for which the universe was created failing, our prayers grateful to God, because they make satisfaction for unworthiness by sin, by giving occasion to Him of doing for their sakes that for which He made all things, which is to be beneficent; insomuch that it seems in a manner to be the same to pray God and restore the universe. God cannot hold nor contain Himself from being liberal, He is perpetually coveting to be beneficial; and therefore He exhorts us to pray without intermission, because He desires to be giving without intermission. Why do we frustrate His desire and our own good? Beg importunely, for this importune impudency in begging is grateful to Him.

God many times defers to grant our demands, although He be desirous to give, either because we ask after an unworthy manner, or not sorrowful for our sins, or too confident of our own merits, or not with due reverence, or begging temporal things too earnestly, and spiritual too remissly; and for the most part we demand such things, and after such a fashion, that the very granting our request is sometimes deservedly its punishment. Were it a decent

manner of asking anything of a parent, if the murderer of his only son, carrying in his hands, as yet imbrued with blood, the sword wherewith he murdered him, should beg of the father the son's inheritance? What an unparalleled impudence were this? He deserved to have taken from him what was granted before, not to receive new courtesies. Men frequently proceed thus; either not detesting their faults, or remaining impenitent: they were our sins that murdered Christ. We must go to pray pure and undefiled, and not presuming upon our own merits, but acknowledging our unworthiness dress ourselves in the garments of our brother Jesus, according to the craft of Jacob, that so we may receive a blessing from God. Let us clothe ourselves with the merits of Jesus which are ours, for He lent us them; not that they make us formally just and pleasing to God, but because they are the cause of our sanctification. Being so apparelled let us appear in prayer, using the mediation of His Only-Begotten, begging of God what He cannot deny us; then thou beggest not for thyself but for Christ, and the favour is done to Him. If thou make account thou givest to Christ what a beggar asketh in the Name of Christ; the same is done by the Heavenly Father. If thou be moved when it is demanded for Christ's sake, how much more readily will God be moved to give an alms? Is He less merciful than thou art miserable?

Nevertheless, many times thou art not effectual with the Father, although thou allege the merits of His Son, because the merits themselves and sufferings of Christ are not effectual with thee. They say if an orator would persuade his auditory he must first of all persuade himself. Thou canst not complain of God if He grant thee not those graces

which thou demandest by the Passion of His Son, since thou wilt not quit thy faults and daily defects for the same. How canst thou expect to incline the will of the Father to thee for the Blood of His Son, if for the same thou wilt not yet quit thy own will. If thou ask after a less decent manner, how canst thou hope to gain thy suit by a petition that is worthy of punishment? Men expect to be petitioned, not only civilly but submissively; and thou presumest to be efficacious with God, being proud-hearted, immodest, distracted. Learn of Christ in the Garden how to pray; lying prostrate on the ground, each joint as it were shivering and quaking, and all bathed in a bloody sweat. If He had taken thee apart with Him, to pray together to His Heavenly Father, the Choirs of Angels standing amazed, and accompanying that Angel who comforted Jesus Himself, wouldst thou also sleep then as the three Apostles did, or employ thy thoughts about the toys and trifles of worldly commodities, beholding Christ in the interim in such a plight for thy sins, and the Angels so absorbed in a reverential amazement? Thou that art about to entreat for thy own offences with tears, why wilt thou busy thy mind with sportive entertainments? How earnestly doth a lawyer plead before a man in a cause which concerns another's life and death? Be not thou recklessly slothful before God, whilst thou pleadest for thy own crimes.

Consider also what thou askest. What parent, if His child ask a stone or scorpion, will not be readier to give him an egg or a loaf of bread? Why complainest thou of God, if demanding temporal things, which are a poison, wherewith thou wilt intoxicate thyself and play the madman against Him, He grant thee spiritual? One must not give a sword to a

frantic person to hurt another, although he demand his own; how much less, if it be to hurt him that gives it? Why dost thou judge God so wicked or foolish, that asking what is not thy own, thou wouldst have Him give thee weapons to hurt both thyself and Him? Learn yet further of Christ how to pray: O most amiable and loving Truth, let it not be as I will, but as Thou: Thy will be done in all; Thou knowest best what is expedient. Even spiritual gifts also are sometimes deferred, because we ask them not with a due esteem, neither are they sought with like ardour and desire that temporal things are. He asketh a little unworthily, who asketh great things but coldly and remissly. God will have us ask seemly what beseems Him to give, and by deferring the gift He enkindles our desire and disposeth us more worthily. Men think to draw God to their frivolous ends with any kind of worship, and soothe Him up with any piece of service, and still Him as we do a child with a rattle. Therefore it behoves God not to be always too facile, but to give worthily gifts worthy of His hand, either preventing all our prayers, or if He expect them, expecting worthy ones. For when of His own accord He will not impart His gifts unless entreated, He does it not for want of liberality, but out of a desire of our profit, and a trial and exercise of our affection. Therefore it is but good reason that He expect complete prayers and seemly desires, and not render His grace contemptible by giving it to him who shows he contemns it while he begs it so tepidly; for we value not slightly what we compass with difficulty, and procrastinated hopes have a more welcome issue. God for the most part changeth our petitions into other favours more hidden from us, paying us but in another coin, or else He expects a fitter opportunity;

for if He should impart them now, perchance we should swell a little with pride, and sooner be obnoxious to ingratitude.

Thou must also pray for others: he that petitions for another hath the first share and foretaste of the favour obtained. He that will anele another, dips first of all his own finger in the oil pot. But be sure thou be always mindful of thy own neediness. Thou must like Lazarus beg an alms of God and of His Saints and Angels, coveting to fill thyself with the crumbs of celestial blessings. Travel about, walk from door to door among the ranks of Angels and choirs of Saints, begging everywhere an alms of grace, and chiefly of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who has ample power given her to divide it forth; who being as it were the mistress of the family in the house of God, she carries at her girdle the keys of mercy. Cry aloud, show thy sores, thy nakedness, and mendicity. Be confounded that any beggar should demand more earnestly relief of his temporal necessities, than thou redress of thy spiritual; and procure to comprise in thyself the importunity of all beggars together, in order to obtain the least degree of grace. One must with more eagerness seek relief of the least spiritual necessity than of all temporal ones together, were they all pressing upon him. Blush to see so many needy souls that groan with thee under the same calamities, with how great humility and plenty of tears they beg redress; while thou sittest with dry eyes, rejoicing amidst such want of spirit, insensible of thy pressing necessities. Humble thyself as beggars do, win affection, expect patiently, urge importunely, be only not impudent in wearying God with prayers, that at least thy importunity may force an alms.

CHAPTER XX.

That we must not intermit our practice of prayer.

As much as the soul surpasseth the body so much must we prefer prayer before all other corporal conveniences. What a deal of care in our lodging, bedding, apparel, and daily sustenance, is required to preserve life and our bodily health; much more will be requisite for the life and safety of our soul which hath more numerous and heavier enemies than the body. The body is annoyed with the injuries of the weather, and the pinching gripes of hunger; but the soul hath even these very enemies of the body for its enemies, yea, and also its commodities, and the body itself, the whole world moreover, and hell with all its host, and sometimes the very favours from Heaven, and its own virtues, if it know not how to use and conserve them in humility. Against all these it hath one only help and refuge, and that is prayer. How then can it be neglected or intermitted at any time, since the body, being better fenced against fewer enemies, will have almost the whole day spent upon it and that custom never omitted. Many, because they find themselves firm and constant in their good purposes, think they can suffer no prejudice by intermitting the exercise of prayer for some laudable employment. Let them beware, let them beware they be not deceived: perchance they will falter although they

find themselves strong and able. He that is lusty of body, if he should forbear eating to gain more time for labour, would without doubt at length decay, and find his body in a weak condition: so he that experienceth himself constant in the service of God, if he detract time from prayer to spend it in other exterior employments, though pious, will at length grow faintish, and easily discover his own imbecility. We must never omit prayer, because we never omit our corporal refection; and if at any time it be omitted, we are careful afterwards to make amends. If one for three or four days together should refrain from sleep, out of a mere covetousness of labouring, in a short time he would go mad. Five hours or more are necessary each day for our corporal rest: the repose of our soul is prayer; very many, because, quitting their good purposes, they betake themselves so late to it, become giddy-brained and beside themselves.

Our prayer, which is the food and repose of our soul, must be quiet and free from disturbance; for we take our bodily sustenance, though corruptible, and shortly to be together with ourselves the food of worms, sitting and with quietness. The benefit of prayer is not stinted to that hour or time we are at it, but hath influence upon the whole day. A little leaven seasons the whole batch, and a little prayer will season the whole day. Prayer is not only beneficial for that respite of time wherein we pray, because we spend it well and to our own advantage; but much more in regard of the whole day, that we lose it not wholly. A long time's profit depends upon a short moment. If thou wilt make purchase of the ensuing day, let thy rising in the morning be seconded at least with one hour's prayers. After a due and fervent prayer one is

replenished with holy illustrations, which interlace themselves ever and anon amidst our succeeding employments. After a great noise is past there remains a ringing and buzzing in our ears, and the day's actions become frequently the subject of our dreams: so from the repose of prayer, certain images of what passed in it diffuse themselves through our daily affairs, and holy inspirations do frequently recur: he that looks steadfastly upon the sun, whatsoever he beholds afterwards seems to carry a resemblance thereof. Although one know completely what appertains to his duty, prayer conduceth much to ground him more solidly in it. Truths, themselves gotten by prudence, experience, learning and reading, do penetrate more profoundly when in prayer they come from above. Corn-fields prosper better when they are watered from heaven than by the inlet of a brook or fountain: the higher a stone falls the more impetuous is its motion, and makes a deeper dint in the ground. The same truth coming from Heaven strikes the heart with a deeper impression and excites more vigorously to fervour and devotion. They are our wicked propensions that mislead us from the paths of virtue, and this obstacle is removed by the benefit of prayer, which by devotion begets inclinations to good, and is a kind of fuel which feeds the ardour of doing well, preventing the fuel of sin. But why do I insist so much upon the advantages of prayer? It is enough for me, O Divine Truth, that Thou showest Thyself most affable in it, and most bountiful towards me: there Thou discoverest Thyself, there I embrace Thee, and repose as in Thy arms in this tumult of affairs. Thou showest Thyself in it, O clear-shining Truth, to my endarkened spirit as in Thy throne, that it may harbour no guile nor deceit.

Our prayer must also be prolix, while health and age permits, and so we may supply for the time of sickness when we cannot, and must always think we have prayed but little. That most elevated man and great zealot of God, Father Didacus Martinius, made every day and with great diligence and strict account four thousand acts of love to God, and added apart another sum, purposely to make recompense for the time of his last sickness, if perchance then he should not be able, as he desired, to attend to God; he moreover spent every day ten hours with great recollection in conversing with Him in fervent prayer. That devout Father Michael Sosa, when old age and intenseness of pain in his long and last sickness interrupted his exercise of prayer, exhorted his brethren and complained of himself, saying: Make, make amends, O brethren, for all remissness in the exercise of prayer, while age and strength enables you, providing thus against the future injuries of nature, when ye would pray, and neither age nor sickness will permit it. I am sorry now that I cannot pray when I would; I am sorry I did not when I could. So did he accuse himself, whose mind was so absorbed in God, that he would walk up and down like one in an ecstacy; when he was about to wash his hands, forgetting to turn the cock of the lavatory, he often rubbed them as if the water had fallen upon them, and afterwards wiped them with the towel as if they had been washed. Sometimes being transported in spirit, he suffered a rapture for eight hours together, and being come to himself he thought it no more than a little quarter. O confusion, and our benumbness! we that stand in far greater need of praying are quickly weary, and think that short respite of time which we bestow upon God, or rather purchase to

ourselves, very long, but when it is lost by discoursing with men it seems but short; and if we persist as long in prayer as worldlings sit at a banquet, we think we have done more than enough.

CHAPTER XXI.

How efficacious the grace and favours of Christ are.

I WISH any one knew and could utter what my mind aims to conceive and as yet cannot. Oh, how much I labour to comprise in my heart and cannot sufficiently comprehend it! Grant, O Eternal Truth, that I may clearly discover something that I have in Christ, and the immense riches that are reserved for me in my Jesus. We know not, we know not, O mortals, what treasures we possess in Christ! The brethren of Joseph were afflicted with famine, because they were ignorant that he reigned in Egypt: why are we afflicted? our Brother reigns in Heaven. Rejoice all ye sinners and beggars, ye that are in calamity and distress, because that Brother of yours, that loves you more tenderly than does all the world besides, Who of all others sticks closest to you, is highest in God's favour, is most wealthy, is God, and for your sakes hath been afflicted. I congratulate, I congratulate with sinners, because Christ in Himself hath most fully satisfied the Divine justice, frustrating all its hope of making a prey of you, and this without any double dealing; yea, in all rigour of equity. Christ is the comfort of Divine mercy, and the treasure of God's clemency. I congratulate with

the needy, I congratulate with the miserable, I congratulate with the distressed; because it is your most loving Brother Who hath the dividing of the Divine treasures as He thinks good; Who gives charters of beatitude and grants of true joy. God hath placed for master of His family not a foreigner, not an Angel, but your very own Brother.

Christ is our most faithful friend; for when we, as being naked and miserable, were altogether unworthy to appear before the King, He, that we might come into the presence of God our Sovereign not only not unworthily, but after a most honourable manner, and so obtain mercy at His hands, He, I say, clad us with a most rich purple dyed in His own Precious Blood, to wit, Divine grace, merited for us by His Passion and remaining inherent in us. He satiates our hunger with His own Body, He quencheth our thirst with His sacred Blood, He enricheth our penury with the ample treasure of His inexhaustible merits. If thou wilt know how much Christ's merits are thine, and how thou mayest employ them to gain grace, and offer them to God to obtain mercy, hence gather it, to wit, because He reputed thy sins His. It was said in the person of Christ, the words of my offences. Yet we must not think His merits so to be ours as that it is not needful to have any of our own, but may be saved by sitting still and doing nothing; for Jesus died not that we might be negligent, but fervent and zealous in the Divine service. Even as the Soul of Christ could not suffer damnation for thy sins, unless He committed some Himself, which was impossible: so neither shalt thou be saved by the merits of Christ, unless thou do good works and have grace inherent in thee, which nevertheless is also from Christ. He gave us then His merits

that we might use them as our own, to appease God's wrath and indignation, no otherwise than He took upon Him our sins as His own, to make satisfaction; He grieved, He deplored them, He satisfied for them as if they had been His own delinquencies. He gave us not His mere naked works, but clothed in their robes of dignity, that is, as performed by a Divine Person; insomuch that He took upon Him our sins, as committed by most vile and abject creatures, His servants; so we should partake of His merits, as treasured up by the Son of God equal to His Heavenly Father.

Let us imitate Christ inasmuch as He appropriated to Himself our faults, that we may learn how to use His merits and appropriate them to ourselves. Deem, O sinner, Christ's merits thine, and upon that account make thy demands with great confidence, for this is to ask in the name of Christ. His merits given to us are far more available to this than if we had done the same ourselves, and had been crucified for the glory of God; for in that case they would not be the works of God, but man, a sinner. Lo, then, how much thou art obliged to Christ, Who took upon Him thy sins and gave thee His merits; Who quitted thee of so great evil, and bestowed upon thee so great good. These two scores, upon which He demands this satisfaction of thee, are infinitely obligatory, to wit, that as He satisfied for thy sins as if He had committed them, so thou must not offer the merits of Christ otherwise to God and procure grace by them than if they were thy own.

O most sweet Jesus, that I could but understand what benefit and advantages have and do accrue to us, so wretched, from Thee! We were monsters of horror, and now by Thy means we are become a

spectacle grateful to God; we were in the very mud and bottom of hell, and now we are in the bosom, I will not say of Abraham, the father of nations, but God, Thy Father; we were in the throat of the infernal dragon, now we are in the heart of God Himself; we were an object unworthy of the Divine eyes, now we are worthy of His embracements; we were slaves condemned to the prison of hell, now by Thee we shall be crowned kings of Heaven. Who can conceive whither we had precipitated ourselves, and to what Thou hast exalted us? Our misery ought to have been thoroughly contented, if Thou hadst only freed us out of hell; but not Thy mercy, unless Thou hadst also elevated us above the heavens and so many Angels. Thou hadst done too much when we were involved in an irreparable misery, and so desperately, that all redress seemed wholly impossible, if Thou hadst only obtained of Thy Father a surcease of His anger, but Thou gottest us also our pardon. Thou hadst done too much in getting our pardon; but Thou moreover gainedst us His good will, His love, and His favour. Thou hadst done too much and a thing deserving admiration, if Thou hadst only won His good-will; but Thou obtainedst for us also gifts and graces. Thou hadst done too much, and what might worthily make us amazed, if Thou hadst obtained for us but the least gift at God's hand; but Thou hast gotten us His Kingdom and Thy own inheritance. Thou hadst done too much if Thou hadst effected this but once; but Thou hast effected that it should be given us innumerable times, if we faltered so often, supposing we had recourse to Thee by true penance. Lastly, Thou obtainest for us whatsoever God possesseth, and vouchsafedst to admit us,

as loathsome and abominable as we were, to share with Thee in Thy patrimony. Behold, O man, from whence Christ hath delivered thee, and where He hath installed thee! If thou unwittingly and at hap-hazard hadst freed another, not from death but some casual distress, what thanks and gratitude wouldst thou expect from him? Savage beasts are grateful even for some benefits. A fierce lion, for one thorn pulled out of his foot, was mindful of the good turn after a long time and requited it. And why make we the immense benefits conferred on us by Christ of an inferior rank to those of wild beasts, and rather stand not amazed and at a nonplus through desire of gratitude? But perchance Christ was obliged to do for us what He did, or did it with ease and without expense? Nay, we were His enemies; and the business was most difficult and desperate, and the achieving it cost Him no less than the price of His Blood and precious life.

O immense charity of God, what hast thou done for hateful man! When we were in an impossibility of salvation, and knew not which way to turn ourselves, Thou, O most merciful God, foundest out a remedy, a device, a stratagem of stupendous mercy; and when the compassing of it was out of our reach, Thou Thyself wouldst execute the design. But what kind of remedy was it? What captive durst wish, much less ask of his King, that to gain his freedom he would become prisoner? Thou, O my Jesus, wert content for our sakes to do more than we durst either hope or wish. Thou, being the King of Glory, wert bound for us hand and foot, and treated as one that pleads guilty; yea, condemned and executed for us, Thy enemies, that stood impeached of high treason. It were an act worth

admiration if an Emperor should deign to visit a peasant cast into prison for his misdemeanours; and how much more of his own betrayer? What if he should quit his throne for him, and in a disguised habit remain prisoner, while the malefactor made an escape? Thou didst this, O most loving Jesus. His praise is never sufficiently renowned, who made himself captive to redeem his friend; nor that servant, who to rescue his King, exposed himself both to his enemies and death; nor that parent who lost one of his own eyes to save one of his son's, who otherwise had lost both. But what wonder if a friend for a friend, a servant for a King, a parent for his child, did such a feat? How much more did my Jesus for me, not a friend, but an enemy; not His king, but a base slave of the devil; not His child, but a child of perdition? If He had pardoned me my trespass, it had been enough; but He relinquished His throne, He lost His life, and over and above enthroned me in His Kingdom. If He had only cancelled the disgrace and infamy of my sin, He had showed a rare clemency, though the punishment due for it had stood good; but He hath pardoned the penalty, and replenished me both with joy and glory. Are these things perchance false, or is faith infallible? If they be truth itself, how chances it that while we relate them with our mouth we are not affected towards the Person of Christ with our heart, Who gave us His Heart, and inclined and still inclines the Heart of God towards us? O, how dear ought Jesus be to us, for Whom we are so much beloved by God!

Consider what great good thou enjoyest in Christ. Infallibly God would not endure us and our impudency, if Christ were not our Mediator. He beautifies our deformity, and renders us comely in the

eyes of God. He clothed our nakedness with grace and attired us in His own robes when we were so miserably tattered, that we could not appear in the presence of God; and enriched us with His merits that we may appear. How gratefully did He take it at St. Martin's hands, that he gave Him but the one half of his cloak. Jesus gloried and made as it were a flourish before the Angels with that torn rag; and we are ungrateful to Him, Who clad us in purple and a Divine garment when we were naked, unworthy, and infected with leprosy; not that He might only cloak the sore, but thoroughly cure the loathsome disease, and being washed, like Naaman as it were in a Jordan, make us truly sound and beautiful. Neither do we prize the garment and grace and His merits, for Whose sake His Father tolerates us, takes notice of us and, which is the chief, makes us the object of His love. O ungrateful mortals! how comes it to pass that your hearts are not forced after Christ, Who is our treasure, our riches, and our beauty? Without Him we are deformed and unsightly to the eyes of God; by Him, comely and conspicuous.

God stands proportionably in order to mankind and Christ its Redeemer, as doth our eye to its object, which is colour and light. Without light all colours are invisible, they are void of all beauty; it, by only illuminating them, beautifies them: so Christ, Who was a Light to the revelation of nations, makes God look regardingly upon us men, now visible and sightly to His eyes, who were buried before in darkness and the shadow of death. Light is the first and chief in the class of visible things, very agreeable to good eyes; by it all things are seen, and only seen so far forth as they partake of it: for only with light, or in light, or by light, colours are discernible.

Light resides in the colour with our eye, and in the space intermediate betwixt both. So Christ is that which is the first and most visible in the Divine eyes; most grateful and acceptable to those of His Father; other men only are so forasmuch as they partake of Him: by Him, and with Him, and in Him they are conspicuous: it is He that disposeth them and makes them regardable before God. All the lustre and grace of colour consists in light, and by its means hath its being; and all the glory, honour, and grace of men is by Christ; it is all His blessing and benevolence. Mark how regardless the choicest and loveliest rarities are by night; they are as if they were asleep, or rather not at all: so soaring spirits and subtle wits without Christ lie shrouded in darkness, and are no more regardable than a nothing. Why then dost thou glory in anything besides Him? Without light fair and foul is all one, and both of them in a sorry condition: without grace by Christ a sharp and piercing wit and a dull and doltish one is much the same; and all other endowments of nature, art, and industry, are no more than if they were not at all. The heavens also and the sun are only beneficial by their light, by which they effect all their production: so God by Christ alone communicates all the blessings He imparts to man. Of all our sublunary simple qualities the heavens admit none besides light; so neither shall any man ascend to Heaven but he whom the light of Christ irradiates; neither shall any prayer be heard with acceptance which petitions not by His sacred Name.

O Jesus, the Light of men, the true Light which illuminates every man coming into this world, illuminate me, that Thy Father may behold me, Who, if He see in me anything of Thine, cannot reject

me; if He hear Thy Name in my mouth, cannot but hearken to me. Oh, the force of the grace of our Only-Begotten Christ, which begets so many children so grateful to God! Where Christ is or His Name is heard, thither mercy flies immediately: there mercy is certainly to be found. Oh, how efficaciously sounds the voice of Christ, by which we assuage His Father's anger, and press Him to our relief! How can such obsequiousness of His Only Son, most obedient, most holy, most officious, most loving, but move most tenderly such a Parent, especially since He sees Himself beloved by Him alone according to the fulness of His desert, amidst so many exulcerating affronts of men? The name of a child, prescinding from all respects of duty, is grateful even to the most unnatural and miserly; what then will it be to a most beneficent God, especially if we add so many services exhibited even to His unthankful enemies. He that considers Christ's dutifulness towards His Father, will adjudge all rewards more than due to Him. His Father lost the world by the sin of man, but such was the officiousness of His Son that He regained it, and restored it to Him; and was this a small piece of service? All mankind and innumerable Angels became rebellious and refractory to His Father; the Son took upon Him to quell their stubbornness and teach them obedience, and this at the expense even of His own life. All mortals fell into a high contempt of the Father; the Son by honouring Him would make amends for all. He finally restored Him so many servants, He gave Him so many worshippers, so many lovers, so many praisers; He peopled Heaven that was void of inhabitants: and were these but slight services? But with what affection, what diligence, what love, what seemliness per-

formed He this? It was altogether infinite, and such, that neither power nor knowledge remains to the Father, whereby to exceed in rewards the merits of His Son.

If God then be of such a munificent nature, that of His own accord He is beneficial to sinners; if so just, that He rewards them beyond their merits, and goes out of Himself that He may be bountiful to all, excepting no just title which exacts His beneficence; will He proceed partially with His Son alone, and not have regard to the prescript of Their agreement, of which as yet the Divine liberality in all its extent falls short? What will He do when He sees that He cannot outstrip the merits of His Son, but that all the rewards He gave Him, and all men for His sake, are infinitely below His services? Will He that was profuse to sinners, be unjustly pinching to His own Son? Will He refuse to give what He demands or we ask for His sake, supposing He cannot reward Him too much, nor hath hitherto done it sufficiently? If God be munificent beyond all expectation, to wit, when men judge punishment more due than favours; will He be niggardly and sparing when they think Him bound, not only to do it by way of friendship, but also in a manner claimed as a due debt? If God hath been bountiful to some masters for a silly servant's sake, because he did his duty, what will He be to His beloved Son, in Whose sole service He took more complacence than in all the world besides? If He esteem men so highly, that He used those expressions, "For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My chosen;" and elsewhere, "For David My servant," etc., and this when He was in a vein of indulgence; will He misprize His beloved Son most dutiful to Him, and be harsh and unmerciful to Him, in Whom He so

gratified us? O men, let us make our demands securely, nay, most securely by Christ; let us approach with confidence to the throne of His grace, because how great gifts soever we demand, God will remain indebted for greater; and because He excuseth not Himself nor disclaims the debt, He will never remain ungrateful or unjust, but will give what we ask, since He neither hath nor can give all that His Son meriteth. Behold, behold, I now see more clearly than the sun, that it is wholly impossible for Him to deny whatsoever we ask for His Son's sake, supposing our petition be made as it ought: for we seem many times to petition, but perchance do it so coldly and foolishly, that it is no better than a mock petition. But he that makes it truly and really in the Name of Christ, not only entreats, but, as it were, conjures and exacts.

Christ is the object and delight of all the Divine senses. God sees nothing that is seemly but by Christ: He hears nothing that is harmonious but by Christ: nothing is fragrant and sweet to Him but the good odour of Christ: He anoints and heals nothing with His mercy but by the oil of the Name Christ: nothing, lastly, relisheth savourly to His palate but what is seasoned and sweetened with the Passion and gall of Christ. Whatsoever He feels, all is grateful by Christ, so regarding us in Him; because we resemble Christ we are pleasing to Him: as one that looks through a green glass, all that he sees is green and agreeable to his sight, though before disagreeing—that colour, which of all others is most pleasing to the eye, tempering the incongruity of the object. Oh, how far would God be from tolerating our loathsomeness and nastiness if it were not for His sake! Oh, how often would He be out of patience with us, even after we were once

put in the state of grace, which we deserved to forfeit for our ingratitude and noncompliance, and many other venial sins, if He did not think upon Him Who sustains us and supplies for our defects. He alone is a lenitive to His Father, to make Him relish less noisomely our impudence and unthankfulness. The world had perished a thousand times long ago, unless it had been detained and maintained by Him, Who by offering a daily Sacrifice infinitely pleasing to His Father, conserves both it and us, so shamelessly impudent. Christ interposeth Himself betwixt us and His Father, Who beholding us in Him, our deformity doth less offend Him; as he that beholds a dead dog but in a looking-glass feels not the stench it sends forth: hurtful objects when they are seen through a glass are not offensive to the eyes. It fares with God as it did with that Emperor who having a very fair emerald, which like a mirror reflected objects, he beheld in it all spectacles of horror, as combats of duellists, slaughters, and whatsoever caused aversion, to the end that the pleasingness of the stone might abate and sweeten the distastefulness of the fact: so our misdemeanours do less exasperate God when He beholds them represented in Christ. Christ is a gem and most precious emerald. Nothing is more pleasing to the eye than that stone whose only sight is said to exhilarate it; and it shuts not up this grateful colour within its own inclosure, but imparts it to the neighbouring air, void otherwise of all colour. So Christ causeth joy to God, and communicates His merits to us, who have none of our own, to the end that being endowed with His grace and the verdure of hope, we may confide that by Him we shall be acceptable to God. All our good and graces are but only the exuberancies and as it

were the superfluities and offals of the merits of Christ.

CHAPTER XXII.

How devoutly we ought to be affected towards the most Blessed Virgin Mary.

How great is our misery and malice, since though the mercy and goodness of God be infinite, it nevertheless stands in need of other helps and industries for our redress! Christ, the Incarnate Truth, was a wonderful invention to satisfy the Divine justice; but because this instrument of mercy was to be our Judge, God's love towards Christ provided another organ of pure mercy, His most sacred Mother, for which, among other immense benefits of the Divine goodness, we ought to be thankful. What had become of us if Mary the Mother of mercy had not been, by whose prayers, though our malignity and shamelessness, which is always affronting God, deserve a continual scourge, yet this revenging hand is suspended, and the scourge changed into a gift? Christ's reverence towards His Mother is more prevalent than our irreverence towards Him. If He offered His life for His enemies, and those who by crucifying Him deprived Him of life, what will He not do for His dearest Mother of whom He received life? If God did so great and remarkable things of His own accord and unrequested for creatures to whom He gave a being, what will He do for her of whom He took His substance and Humanity; she especially mediating and urging Him by the right and prerogative of a Mother?

The entreaties of a mother are as good as a command to towardly children: and what child more towardly than Christ, or what mother better than Mary? What greater obligation imaginable than that of the best of children to the best of mothers? The obligation of Christ is not like that of other children to their parents, but like that of creatures to their God. It is not only such a one as intercedes betwixt the begetter and the begotten (although this also is greater in Christ, since it is not divided betwixt two, like as other children owe their being both to father and mother: so He took human nature of His Mother alone, He having according to it no father, and therefore He owes solely to her His being a man,) but it is also a moral obligation.

Children owe duty and respect to their parents, although they intend not this child in particular but any other; nevertheless, this tie of nature is so sacred, that even barbarians and heathens were of opinion that parents were to be worshipped as second gods, and that the debt which was owing them could never be discharged. O Jesus, Whose doctrine transcended the subtlest capacity of philosophers, Whose example surpassed all human opinion; if ethnics delivered such precepts about honouring parents, what wilt Thou, O Son of God, do in honouring Thine? That was the respect which Gentiles afforded; how much more perfect will Thine be, O Jesus? Thou Who didst build upon the virtues of the ancients, and added to their precepts; Thou Who to the laws of love superadded that of loving our enemies, and in the command of charity declared even concupiscence to be forbidden: so also in the precept of reverencing parents, Thou didst excel in reverence towards Thy Mother;

wherein, besides the debt due by nature, Thou owest another of free election. Other parents have nothing of choice in the child they beget, but with Thy most holy Mother it fared much otherwise. She not only bore Thee, but would only bear Thee alone, and no other but Thee. Her goodwill was expected and desired by God the Father and His Angels. Therefore because Thou art indebted to her for this elective will, Thou repayest it by denying her nothing which she wills. Thou dost acknowledge a stricter obligation towards her than other children have to theirs; one like to that which creatures have towards their Creator. This is the great debt of creation, that God did not only create us, but selected us in particular, and produced us rather than others, whom He left in that heap of things only possible, and their own nothing.

O stupendous excellency of Mary, seeing God is in like manner obliged to her that creatures are to Him, which is infinite! And then as there is an immense distance betwixt being and not being, so the obligation of him that receives being and life infinitely surpasseth all other obligations arising from other common benefits which presuppose being and life. If then, O God worthy of all love, Thou art most liberal towards those that are most deeply indebted to Thee, and most indulgent to those that offend Thee, how canst Thou be griping or hard-hearted to Thy own Mother, to whom alone Thou art indebted, and in such a manner indebted for the riches of Thy mercy and goodness. How canst Thou deny any favour where Thou acknowledgest so a great a debt? Thou dost deservedly impart all by her who imparted life to Thee. For as children can by no goods whatsoever make recompense to their parents for the benefit of life, because

it is the foundation of all other benefits; and all the actions and natural endowments of children are properly belonging to parents, because they gave them their first being: in like manner Thou wilt deny nothing to her who gave Thee human nature; insomuch as giving all by Thy Mother, Thou seemest to give all to Thy Mother, and moreover puttest us upon a necessity of honouring her, since Thou wilt have us to obtain, by her. And because thou hadst of her Thy natural being, that is human nature, so wilt Thou also that we have from her a supernatural being, that is grace; that so by making us the children of Mary supernaturally, Thou mayest satisfy for Thy human filiation by her naturally.

True it is that all things are from God, and this very thing that He is a debtor to His Mother is one of His benefits; but this imports not much towards our right understanding how much He is ready to do for the most Blessed Virgin. For this is the custom and fashion of God, to regard His own favours no otherwise than if He had no hand in our merits, though they proceed from His grace; but is as bountiful in rewarding them, as if they were wholly our own. He will give us a full recompense for our good works as if these good works were not His gifts, nor He assisted us with His grace, but we performed our services by our own strength, and carried of ourselves that proportion to glory. After the same manner will He correspond with the duties of His Mother as if He had contributed nothing to them, but will proceed as if He had received essence, nature, and life from her independently of any benefit and Divine grace, by which she was prevented and pre-elected to that stupendous work of the Divine Conception.

If Christ acknowledge and esteem Himself thus

obliged, will He perchance infringe the precept of honouring parents, or rather seek to fulfil it with pressed and heaped measure? If the obligation wherewith other children are tied to their parents be so great that philosophers judged it indissoluble; since Christ acknowledgeth a greater than any other, can He possibly fail in gratitude? If God recompense with glory the minute services of men even beyond their desert, He will not be wanting in any kind to discharge and satisfy this debt to His Mother, which exceeds all reward and recompense. Who can doubt but that Christ's gratitude towards His Mother surpasseth the love and gratitude of all other men? If then ethnics were of opinion, that children, how obsequious soever, cannot be grateful enough to their parents; can we imagine that Christ will let slip any occasion of gratitude to her? In a word, He was so grateful to His dearest parent, that not content with that reverence which He exhibited to her the while He lived in the exercise of infinite theandrical acts with which He honoured her, in being subject to her, He would have all us to honour her also, and help Him as it were to do the same. For that end He would have us all become her children, that for Him we might love and honour her as our Mother. For as there was an obligation due to her as Mother, He would also have such satisfaction and gratitude as is proper to children. Which filiation He dedicated on the altar of the Cross, when He bequeathed all His to her in the person of His beloved Disciple, saying "Behold thy son." He did it, to wit, when He was at the very point of death, as if He had only desired life that He might be dutiful to His Mother. But being not expedient that He should avoid it, He left a deputy of His filial care and

obedience in St. John, and of observance in the rest of the Faithful, that by this means He might both redeem us by dying, and also be grateful to her, by leaving so many to supply for Him in exhibiting respect, as if He confessed Himself not to have fully accomplished His desire in that behalf. There at the foot of the Cross Mary took us for her children; there she brought us forth, not of her womb, but her heart, which is a more precious member, and its filiation more efficacious. For each child of the womb is not always beloved, but the child of one's heart cannot but be so. There did she bear us together with Christ, amidst throes and pangs which she felt, not in her carnal labour or child-bed. She took us very opportunely for her children at such a time when her bowels were wholly replenished with an affectionate compassion towards her Son, that she might transfer it upon us, and by it ennoble her mercy: as if Jesus had recommended to His Mother what He said to the women, "Weep not over Me, but over your children." And, therefore, hanging on the Cross full of anguish and torment, remitting as it were to others all compassion due to Him, He said to His weeping Mother: Mother, behold thy Son; behold each faithful Christian, and My disciple is thy child; do not so much compassionate and weep over Me as over these thy children, poor wretches and miserable sinners, whom I recommend to thy motherly tuition. Christ knew that the misery of sin was a greater object of mercy than any corporal pain whatsoever; for His Soul did more feelingly resent our offences than His Body did its own torments. Therefore, He would have His Mother transfer her compassion and mercy to the defects, faultiness, and miseries of our soul, that she might

chiefly assist us in them. And because Christ by His sufferings deserved well of the Divine justice for His superabundant satisfaction, therefore was He worthy of that attribute of being Judge of all men, according to the prediction of David, "Give O God, Thy judgment to the King, and Thy justice to the King's Son." The Mother of Christ by compassionating and commiserating Him, deserved well the attribute conferred upon her of compassion and commiseration, that we also may say, Thou hast given, O God, Thy mercy to the Queen, and Thy pious affection to the King's Mother; therefore no grace nor mercy is derived to us but by Mary. From henceforward, O most pious Mother, I take thee for mine; and I will have this to be the first pledge of thy piety, that thou imitate thy first-begotten Son, Who as He not only gave thee to John, but John also to thee, so thou give me to God, since thou also gave God to us.

Therefore, since our misery finds no redress but in God's mercy; and the disposal of it is in Mary's power, to whom her Son denies nothing, and she full of commiseration, why are we so slow and backward in the discharge of our duty and devotion towards her? We must for four reasons be very officious in the service of the Virgin Mother. The first is the necessity and advantage of her intercession; for without her intercourse and solicitation no gifts descend from Heaven; grace depends far more upon Mary than the showers of Heaven did on Elias. The second is the will of Christ, Whose desire is that we honour His Mother, and in honouring her, we do Him a piece of grateful service. For He turns over to her all the debts we owe Him, and she is our creditrix, who must see them cancelled. If what we do to the poor be so

acceptable to Him, that He takes it as done to Himself, and makes them His substitutes in this behalf; how much more gratefully will He take what is done to His Mother, whose debtor He acknowledgeth Himself, to Whom all are indebted?

The third cause is the excellency of the most holy Virgin, to whose worship, though neither the tie of necessity, nor the explicit will of her Son Jesus did move us; nevertheless, the sole title of her rare prerogatives and perfections ought to endear us extremely to her. She is the glory of all pure creatures, and especially of mankind; the next in dignity to God Himself; to whom He granted this privilege, which He alone by reason of the infinitude of His Nature enjoys, to be together a Mother and a Virgin, and Mother of God. God is both a Father and a Virgin Mary is also a Mother and a Virgin. And like as Christ according to His Divinity was most chastely Begotten "in the splendours of Saints" by a Virgin Father without a Mother; so according to His Humanity He was most chastely begotten in the splendours of sanctity, refulgent above all Saints, of a Virgin Mother without a father. O double miracle! both that a Virgin brings forth, and that she brings forth God! And indeed why should a Virgin bring forth but God? Grace and nature are two sisters; the same Artificer gave them both a being, and therefore their proceeding in their different functions is much alike. Even as God, after He had created all things, made an abridgment of them all in Adam and Eve; and all the degrees of life and nature are more eminently in man than in the natures themselves, heavens, plants, and living creatures; insomuch than one man is more valuable than the whole world besides, and is as it were a

little world by himself, and all things do him homage, and were made for his use: so in like manner, because God's workmanship is no less exactly curious in matters of grace, He also compendiated in the second Adam and Eve the whole extent of grace that ever hath or shall be imparted to men and Angels. And Mary alone contains all kind of blessings, and supernatural gifts and degrees of grace in a more singular manner than all the Hierarchies of blessed Spirits and choirs of Saints, in such sort that she alone doth equalize all their sanctity and perfection. Not piety only, but reason also attesteth this assertion; and now it is manifest enough by the revelation made to that blessed man and martyr of Christ, Father Martin Gutierez, whom St. Teresa beheld in Heaven adorned with the ensigns of martyrdom, he dying in prison under the heretics, wearied out with their fetters and ill-usage. The Virgin herself gave many thanks to this her servant for defending her sanctity in these eminent terms. The very Seraphim themselves, and all the other ranks both of Angels and Saints, do homage to her and reverence her as Queen of all, no otherwise than the brute beasts in Paradise to Adam while he stood as yet in the integrity of his nature. Man was created in a degree much superior to other creatures. Mary was exalted above the Cherubim, glorified more than all these glorious intelligences, surmounting them as far as Adam did the common creatures. She alone seems to be twice as great with God and much deeper in His favour than the whole world besides, towards which, though the Son of God showed a wonderful dignation in descending from Heaven for its redemption, yet it could not receive the Holy Ghost unless Heaven first received Him again; but the Virgin Mother at

the self-same time entertained both Him and the Holy Ghost in His superventions.

Therefore the prayers of Mary are effectual with Christ for two respects, both for observance due to a Mother, and for the consummateness of her merits and sanctity. For she is heard both for respect and reverence owing to Him, and worth and dignity due to herself; for the reverence of her maternity, for the worth of her virtue and sanctity; and we also are heard for her sake, whose intercession is not only proficuous but also necessary. Therefore let us fly to Mary in all our distresses, as the child doth to his mother who is beaten by a stranger: she knows how to support and uphold the tottering world with her prayers, nor think that thou layest a heavy burden upon her.

The fourth cause may be an affinity and kind of alliance contracted with the most Blessed Virgin, not only spiritually and after a mystical manner, but even real and according to the body and nature. For nobody is nigher in kindred to another than the sacred Virgin is to thee. He that receives Christ's Body in the Eucharist becomes by a real kind of union one flesh with Him, insomuch that there is no other union among men straiter than this, not even betwixt man and wife; wherefore thou must also esteem thyself akin to the Mother of Christ, and persuade thyself that thou sharest in the same flesh with her. There intercedes also a greater physical and real conjunction betwixt God and thee than there is betwixt thee and thy father. How great then will that be which thou contractest with the Mother of God? What created and real union can be imagined greater than that which passeth betwixt the Divine Word and His most Sacred Humanity, derived from the very bowels of the

most holy Virgin, and what link of consanguinity can be straiter than that betwixt Christ and His Blessed Mother? Therefore the affinity and tie, which we have even according to nature with her, exceeds all affinity among men. And if men upon this score of alliance by blood and kindred do mutually help one another, and have recourse to them for relief in distress, why shall not we have recourse to her, with whom we are linked in the straitest bonds?

What shall I say of the nearness, and as it were spiritual kindred, which we have contracted with her? He by whom thou receivedst the grace of Baptism, or stood for godfather to thee in that Sacrament, becomes thy kinsman, and thou art bound to honour him as thy parent; how much stricter a propinquity and filiation contract we with the Virgin, by whose means we have so often received grace, who hath so frequently brought us forth to God, and into the light and truth of a spiritual life?

I acknowledge thee, O Mother of God, Mother of grace and mercy, for my Mother: and beseech thee that thou wilt not forget that sweet name in which thou thyself takest so much complacence. Thou art styled Mother of grace and mercy; and what ennobled thee with this title but our misery, because we stand in such need of thy grace and commiseration? Wherefore since I am the most miserable of all, I challenge a greater right over thy maternal bowels than all. Thy dignity accrues from my indignity, thy sanctity from my sinfulness; and therefore I claim the first place in thy mercy, because I am the first and greatest and unworthiest of sinners. The sins of men made thee the Mother of God, and my sins alone were sufficient to make thee

the Mother of mercy, Discard me not from thy protection, since all the Religious of our Society are sheltered under thy mantle, as thy most devoted child, Father Martin Gutierez, beheld once in a wonderful vision. For who can lay a better claim to mercy than he that is most miserable? Remember that I alone by my innumerable offences can only maintain this title of honour, in which next to that of a Virgin Mother, thou art wont to glory above all others. I that am most miserable confide, O Mother, in thy mercy; for Heaven and earth will sooner perish, than thy mercy and grace will frustrate those that truly and seriously implore thy assistance, and bestow themselves in thy service. Admit me among them, that with joyfulness and tears I may employ myself in honouring thee. But because my tepidity keeps me cold and dull, as one that am wholly of an earthly complexion, I envy thy clients a little of their fervour; and wish, as did that most devout Father John Trexus, to sweep thy chapels with my mouth and water them with my tears. And to accomplish this in deed, that good zealous Father and devout child of the Virgin made on foot a pilgrimage of some miles.

CHAPTER XXIII.

That we must imitate Christ; and of the sorrow and suffering of His most Blessed Heart.

How can that man relish anything of gust who thinks upon Jesus afflicted for the gust of men? One drop of His Blood was more than sufficient for our redemption. How happens it then that the effusion of the whole, and such a world of sorrows, afflictions, and disgraces, are not an effectual incentive to imitation? Did the Son of God suffer such and so much in vain and to no purpose, since the least prayer He made was a superabundant satisfaction for a thousand worlds, and able to purchase grace for all mankind? And yet so great an excess of torments sufficeth not to stir up me alone to His imitation!—for Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example. The least swervings of our will cost God no less than the most exorbitant of our offences. Oh, if I did but seriously ponder my works, O Lord, how I should be seized with fear! Thy works are wonderful; I wish my soul could thoroughly know them; prodigious wonders which Thou hast placed upon the earth, wonderful testimonies of Thy love, and my ingratitude and hard-heartedness. I wish my heart would become like melted wax, I set Thee as a signet upon it, that so I may relish no gustful thing in this life, but imitate Thy griefs and afflictions. I will place that sad Heart of my Jesus,

which was in a perpetual crucifixion, as a signet upon mine; so shall I have it always in my mind, and my soul will waste within me. What can be imagined more effectual to extinguish in us all gust of our own will, than the memory of Jesus tasting gall, and the whole series of His bitter Passion? Its consideration is so feelingly efficacious, that it made Christ Himself become irksome and fearful so far as to sweat drops of blood. What more efficacious to debar us of all gust than to compassionate with the sorrowful Jesus? It was not without mystery that those who so perseverantly persisted with Christ upon the Mount Calvary, and jointly suffered there with Him, concluded their life with no other martyrdom, whereas the rest of the Apostles and Disciples were crowned by the hands of persecuting tyrants. For the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of Jesus, St. John Evangelist, and the Magdalen, died not martyrs. A greater sorrow than any death or passion tormented them by mere compassion, and was in lieu of a cruel martyrdom. Let us then suffer jointly with Jesus, and let our sufferings be joyfully voluntary.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and Life. What way will we take to arrive at a life truly happy but the life of Jesus, which was a continual death and perpetual crucifixion? It might suffice to make us eternally condole and compassionate with Jesus, and loathingly abhor all self-seeking appetites, if we consider what torture He suffered that last night and day of His life in all His members, there being no whole bit to be found in Him from the sole of the foot to the crown of His head. His tongue, which the torments left untouched, that it might not go scot-free, seems to have shared as deeply as any of the rest; for the most patient Jesus complained

of no disjointings, anguish of His limbs, but only of His thirst; to let us understand that even those parts which seemed to be vacant wanted not also their torment. Neither did the intenseness of the pain stupify or benumb them, but all were preserved strong, lively and vigorous, that they might be more able to suffer; and therefore He being ready to give up the ghost cried out with a loud voice; whereby also He gave a remonstrance of the never-relenting fervour with which He solicited our cause amidst such bitter torments, and of the humble acquiescency wherewith He accepted death by the bowing of His head, and the profound respect and reverence He used in fulfilling His Father's precept, so full of difficulty.

Notwithstanding all this, we ought to resent most feelingly what He suffered all His life long in that one little member of His most holy Heart, whose pain was insufferably great even from the first moment of His conception, and continued so all the time of His life. It was His Heart that did first and last partake of torment. It was so much the more feelingly resentive, by how much the unsupportable anguish of all the rest of His members met in it, the most delicate of all others, as in their centre. No less affliction harboured in the Heart of Jesus from that moment, than He felt in the Garden when He sweat Blood through His whole Body. And even as there He was seized after an unwonted and frightful manner with a lively apprehension of all the anguish and pains of His Passion, so also no less intensely did He apprehend the same in the womb of His most loving Mother. For Christ's knowledge was not obnoxious to any imperfection, at that time especially when He took upon Him the grand affair of our redemption; and

all the difficulty He was to undergo and break through was without any dissimulation clearly represented to His understanding. He did there most perfectly apprehend all the series of His sufferings, the innumerable labours of His whole life, His contempts and revilements; and from that time this knowledge was as afflictive (and perchance more, if there could be any equality) as it was afterwards in the Garden; for there the sense of pain broke out and diffused itself through all His Body, in such sort that the anguish dispersed through the whole did remain less pungent in the Heart; but in the womb of the most glorious Virgin the whole sea of grief was confined within the narrow channel of one small member, the little tender Heart of the Infant Jesus. When one sheds tears he is less sensible of an affliction than when the anguish is shut up and smothered in the heart, the eyes remaining dry and tearless: so Christ when He did not sweat, nor the Blood trickled out, sorrowed perchance more, because no particle at all of that sorrow did evaporate; nevertheless it was behooveful for our instruction, to show once exteriorly how much He continually suffered interiorly. That grief accompanied Him all along through the whole course of His life. Jesus enjoyed always a most perfect and intuitive knowledge of all things as they are in themselves. Unless by Divine privilege and dispensation He had been particularly assisted, the intenseness of the pain had caused death in that first instant He began to live, and therefore His whole life was a signal and continual miracle. Neither did His own Passion alone afflict Him, but much more His compassion over others. He was moved to it while He considered the distress of His most loving and innocent Mother; He was

moved to it in behalf of us; He resented more feelingly the torments of martyrs, the austerities of confessors, the diseases and maladies of His Saints, than they themselves who did undergo them. If an affectionate mother do more grieve at the sickness of her child than the child himself, who can deny but Christ loved His more tenderly than any mother doth her only child. He did truly bear our labours, and our griefs did He sustain. How great then must His pain needs be, if it surpass that of martyrs, penitents, and sick folks comprised in one? But, above the rest, He was touched with a lively compassion over us, for all and each particular sin of all and each particular man who hath been or shall be to the world's end. The immensity of this pain will strike him that considers it into amazement, it being able, if it had not been miraculously suspended, to have a thousand times bereaved Him of life. If some men have sorrowed so intensely for their sins that the vehemency of their contrition caused death, how could it be but that the sorrow of Jesus for one alone, and that the least venial sin, of any one man, must needs extinguish life in Him; He penetrating so perfectly the deformity of the fault, as also the Majesty of God His Father Who is offended, and the baseness of man, the offender, and loving so ardently both the one and the other? —as nobody can reach the height of His charity, so neither can any sound the depths of His sorrow. If He conceived so great grief for one venial sin, how much will He conceive for all and every venial and mortal so horrid and abominable? He bore an unsupportable weight of sin, Who imposed upon us a sweet yoke and a light burden; and we charge Jesus with the abominable fardel of our iniquities, which forced a bloody sweat from His Body, as the

press doth wine from the bunch of grapes. If any one should have suffered all the torments of martyrs, all the diseases and anguish of all men, even from the first day of Adam's transgression till such time as Christ comes to Judgment, all this would not be equivalent to His pain; which also upon this score that it was spiritual, was bitterer in its kind than any corporal affliction whatsoever. The fulness of the Divinity resided in Christ, and the clear vision of God did illustrate Him, which nevertheless obstructed not some effects; but it was miraculously so ordered, lest by it a tide of joy should overflow His whole Body and the inferior portion of His Soul, that place might be left for sorrow, as it fell out in His sacred Passion. But in the Heart of Jesus grieving for our offences, it did not only give way to extreme sadness, but did extremely augment it, by reason of His perfect knowledge of God offended. For how much more perfect this knowledge was, it caused a sorrow so much greater; and Christ alone had a more perfect intuitive knowledge of God than all the Cherubim and Seraphim, than all the other Angels and Saints in Heaven. Christ's love also towards God, offended, was corresponding to the vision of the Divine Majesty; wherefore His sorrow exceeds the comprehension either of word or thought, for He let no opportunity slip of suffering as much as He could, and was beseeming Him to suffer: yea, prodigious miracles were wrought in His most holy Soul, that sorrow might have its full effect. Why then are we so solicitous to compass joys, and rack our wits so much in the search of new pleasures, if Jesus suffered all this in His Heart, which none ought to think upon without tears, and each good Christian ought to make it the theme of his thought.

How darest thou, O my heart, slacken the reins to joy? Consider the cause why thy Jesus suffered. It was for thy offences, that He might work thy salvation. Because I trespassed, therefore He loves me so tenderly and confers blessings upon me. Why doth not this Lover of me and Benefactor to His enemies heap coals of fire upon my head, and make me blush at my own proceedings? Why doth He not heap coals of fire upon my heart, that I may burn with love of Him and a desire of His imitation? I will place the sad Heart of Jesus upon my obdurate heart, that He may find me at length according to His Heart, a friend, and desirous of suffering. Compassionate, O my heart, with the suffering Jesus, and comfort Him in His sufferings. How wilt thou obtain mercy by the sufferings of Christ, if thou hast not compassion over Christ suffering? Be not unmindful of such a courtesy from thy Surety. St. James Guisay, not to be unmindful of it, besides his daily meditation and other devotions to it, carried it always about him written in a little book, in token that it was engraven in his heart, and failed no day to read it over. This memory of his Saviour's Cross was so acceptable to Almighty God, that He vouchsafed him after his entrance into the Society, a true conformity with it, that is, to be crucified for His sake, and by his sufferings to adumbrate the death of His Blessed Son. And Christ was not backward in recompensing the devotion of the Saint; for upon the place where he and many other Saints were crucified, miraculous lights were seen every Friday in the air, approving and attesting the conformableness of their suffering with that of Christ. The memory of His Passion is grateful to Him, and that we might have a perpetual memorial

of it before our eyes, He instituted the admirable Sacrament of His most holy Body.

But if thou be mindful of Christ suffering, why art thou not insufferable to thyself, and heartily angry at thy own proceedings? The King of Moab sorely straitened by the siege of the Israelites, being quite out of hope of all relief, took his eldest son, who was to succeed him in his throne, and offered him in holocaust upon the walls, and it caused such a commotion and indignation in the Israelites' camp that forthwith they raised their siege and departed. Behold the holocaust of the first and Only-Begotten Son of God upon the altar of the Cross! Why art thou not replenished with disdain against thyself, quitting all self-will and pleasure? We use to compassionate even externs, yea, even brute beasts; why do we not so to our God, to our Father, to our Brother? O our shameless obstinacy! who, instead of commiserating Him, crucify Jesus again by new offences! Remember that God is thy Father not thy foe; that He suffers for thee His foe, not for the beasts of the field or their salvation, for thee not for Himself, the bitterest of all punishments, wounded in all His members, not only afflicted with some small ache of His head or stomach; because He did thee and the world a good turn, not because He put cities into combustion; publicly on a day of solemnity and on a mountain betwixt two thieves, as their captain and ringleader; not in a by-corner and secretly; the object of all men's hatred, disgrace and scorn, insomuch that the mercy of men was wanting to Him alone Who is mercy itself. Nevertheless He suffers willingly and lovingly, not forcedly, not frettingly, not complainingly, because it was for thee; of His own people, not of Barbarians and Scythians; for

the space of thirty-three years, not for an hour or two. Compassionate then with Jesus, and make not all that He has done fruitless. Forbear to offend Him, begin to imitate Him; and that His Passion may truly benefit thee, make it the model of thy imitation.

CHAPTER XXIV.

How far we are to follow Christ.

God doth not tempt us, though He hath made our salvation full of difficulty. Nothing is more acceptable to Him, He having done and suffered so much, than that we imitate Him. The words of a man placed in authority are held for laws, and must be fulfilled; why are the deeds of God less observable? He that sets the humble and most sorrowful Heart of Christ as a signet upon his own, let him set it also upon his arm that he may imitate what he commiserates. Love is not soft and effeminate, but strong and masculine, and the Cross of Christ will crucify God's zealot by comparison and emulation. The imitation of Christ is harsh and unsavoury; some have it in as much hatred as hell itself, but for all that we cannot emulate better graces. Fear no cozenage when He persuades thee to take the Cross for thy delights, disgrace for thy honour, poverty for riches; He is the prime and undoubted Truth. The Eternal Wisdom and Divine intellect hath so ordered, hath judged it expedient. Be not diffident, He is the supreme goodness and highest power; by these, nevertheless, He redeemed thee, and by the same thou must complete thy salvation; that work is

begun and accomplished by the same instruments; by these Christ ascended into Heaven, and the members must not think of going another way than by which the head leads them. They are not poison; Christ Himself sanctified them, and tasted them first of all Himself. Yea, that a small parcel of them might only pass to us, He drunk up almost the whole chalice of sorrows and afflictions; and yet for all that, He lives eternally and sits at the right hand of God. How canst thou but be confounded, whilst seeing Christ accursed by all, thou seekest so much to be honoured and praised? Beholding Him prostrate at the feet of Judas, thou preferrest thyself before thy betters; seeing Him thirsty and in want of a little water, thou covetest plenty and delicate fare.

It is the greatest glory of a servant to follow his master's footsteps. To imitate Christ is a business not only of necessity but dignity; and for this respect the main difficulty is removed, and a sufficient reward allotted for others that occur. If it be a credit to imitate Christ, then it will not be difficult to suffer contempt and revilements of men, for that will be a high point of honour; and there is no contempt where it is a credit to be contemned. It will be also no hard matter to debar oneself of pleasures and superfluous riches to obtain true glory; for worldlings and even heathens did more than this, when they abstained even from necessaries for a seeming and only apparent glory. Let it confound us that some barbarians have been found so loyal and loving to their sovereign, that if he wanted eyes they would put out theirs; if he wanted hands, they in like manner would cut off theirs; and gave this as a pledge of their fidelity and imitation in others. Why do not we, that are

called the faithful, imitate the King of glory in things of far less difficulty? If Christ had only told us what we were to do, though He had not held forth the torch of example, we were to have done it; how much more when He did it first Himself, and did it to the end we might do it after Him; and not only said so in a word, but made large encomiums of the happiness of afflictions? If a prophet had but intimated it, we could pretend no excuse; and how much less can we, when the very Wisdom of prophets, and God's own mouth, hath exaggeratively recommended it, and made Himself a model of it? Jesus never let fall the least idle word, and yet He left so many praises and magnifying speeches of the happiness of poverty and affliction? If it behoved us not to suffer, the exemplary life of Jesus would be to no purpose, and His austerity wholly unuseful to us, who should be insensible of His charity Who paid such a vast and superabundant sum for our ransom; neither should we be taught by so lively an example to love His imitation, and detest all sin and sensual pleasures. Would God have needlessly thrust His Only-Begotten Son upon such thorns, if it imported nothing at all to do what He did, that those whom He pre-elected and predestinated might be made conform to the image of His Son, that He may be the First-Begotten among many brethren? God is not a God of impiety, as Who could take complacence in being so cruel towards His only beloved Child. Fierce and savage creatures are most passionately tender over their young ones; and how could God, Who is most meek and full of mercy, be so tyranically cruel towards His Son, if it were not needful for us to suffer. The enormity of our sins exacted not such heavy penalties for

their redemption; one drop, I will not say of Jesus' Blood, but of His sweat, was superabundant. It was therefore our behoof of imitating Christ and suffering (it being the roadway to Heaven) that required such outrageous torments and rigour of life. God is either cruel and impious, or else it is altogether needful for us to be humble, afflicted and needy, to have a high esteem of Divine charity, and a mean one of ourselves.

Nobody knows the way to Heaven who hath not gone it; nobody ascends up to Heaven but He Who descended from Heaven, Christ Jesus, and who treads the path which He chalked forth. It was a way wholly unknown, nor could any give better directions than Jesus Who knew it and had gone it. Jesus did not as some peasants do, who with their finger or speeeh point out the way to travellers while they themselves sit quietly at home, no whit solicitous whether afterwards they hit or miss: for besides that by word He had taught the path that carries to Heaven, He goes Himself before and leads the way that we may be secure from error. Tell me, if we were certainly assured, as now we are, that there were such things as heavenly joys, and that one were to go thither on foot, and no more were required to compass these joys, but only to know the way which he is wholly ignorant of, and another good body should instruct him in that; who would not buckle himself to this journey, though crabbed and ruggy, especially if he that showed us the way would accompany us and go before? Why then do we not believe Christ and follow Him? Do we fear, the wisdom of God being our guide, to go astray? Do we think we can miscarry, our Blessed Saviour going before? No, certainly. Christ showed us a secure path, and

traced it out to us; so secure, that although we die in it, the very danger and death breeds security; yea, if thou didst love Christ, thou wouldst not stick to die with Him. He loves not Christ who doth not imitate Him, for the virtue of love is assimilation or resemblance. Oh, that one could truly say, I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me: carrying the mortification of Jesus about in my body and implanting it in my soul!

If then thou lovest the Son of Mary, and wilt become His tabernacle as she was, behold with accurateness, and do according to the pattern which is proposed to thee on the Mount Calvary, and take a view of the whole life of Jesus. He chose to live and die in contempt, He was derided and set with the wicked, accounted not only an idiot but a fool. He was beaten as one would not beat his slave; He was punished as if He had been the worst of criminals; of His own accord He shunned all temporal honour when it was exhibited. There was no miscalling or slanderous nickname that was not appropriated to Him. They called Him Samaritan, idolater, possessed person, false prophet, seducer, belly-god, devourer, drinker of wine, blasphemer, and transgressor of the law. He was thought to be a traitor and conspirator against his country, a friend and abettor of sinners. What creature can be named to which He did not humble Himself? He humbled Himself to the Angels. What need was there that an Angel should come to comfort Him, Who was God; since with one sole word He could have destroyed the whole frame of this universe? What needed He say that legions of Angels would vindicate His cause and gainstand His apprehenders, as if He Himself had been unable? What need when He was fasting and hungry,

to take a little meat and as it were an alms from the Angels, since the least word of His mouth could turn stones into loaves of bread? He humbled Himself to men, being obedient to His Mother and Joseph. He humbled Himself to the wicked Princes, Herod, Cæsar, Caiphas, Pilate, by fulfilling their unjust commands, and obeying their decrees and impositions. He humbled Himself to the vilest of men and very servants, as Malchus, His executioners, and others. He humbled Himself to all creatures, permitting heat, cold, iron, thorns, reeds, spittle, and the Cross to exercise their rigour upon Him. He lastly subjected Himself to the very devils. In the time of His Passion He was delivered over to the power of darkness, and He suffered Himself to be carried up by the devil to the pinnacle of the temple. There is no creature from the noblest to the meanest, from the best to the worst, to which my Creator subjected not Himself for my sake; and He that made all things and was Lord of all, would have nothing that He might have me. He possessed no manors, He had no yearly revenues; even of alms He took less than necessity exacted; He went apparelled not like a philosopher, or doctor, or nobleman, but after the manner of a poor beggar. He was also in penury of true friends, insomuch that no entreaty was made to save Him from so much as one box on the ear. He divested Himself of His kingdom and principality, He Himself becoming the mask and guise of His own majesty.

Inasmuch also as He was God, He gave us like documents of humility. That redoubted infinitude and awful Omnipotency is most conspicuous for its humility. For man's sake it made choice of these things which have more of labour and less of credit.

When He created man He would not make Him as He had done the rest of creatures by one commanding word of sovereignty, but by serving and moiling with His hands, as if He had been some potter or labourer. In the work also of our redemption He would not ransom us, as He might, by assuming some noble and refined nature, as that of a Seraph, but He would espouse the meanest of all rationals, infamous and in disgrace for the disloyalty of our first parent, and falling of itself into decay and ruin. In His glorification when He is to satiate us with the glory of His majesty, and as supreme Lord give a full and final reward, He tells us He will play the serving-man and wait. For Christ is truly the Son of God, and both taught and practised the fashions of God in His manner of proceeding. The Father acknowledging His spirit of humility in His Son, deservedly said, Behold My servant, I will receive Him; I have breathed My Spirit upon Him. We, nevertheless, who glory in being Christians, and seek to be entitled the children of God, shun those things which Christ the Son of God loved so dearly. How could we hate poverty, humility, and the Cross more heartily, if Christ should command it under pain of damnation, than we now do, when for them He hath promised a reward of glory? Our ears are as open to the lies of the world, and we as pliable to the suggestions of the devil, as if he had been crucified for our sakes; and we so loathe Christ's manner of life, and set as little by His counsels, as if some fool or raving buffoon had blabbed them out at random in the market-place.

If an earthly king should offer far less pay to his soldiers, they would without reply follow him through all kind of ways and weather; especially if He should treat them no otherwise for diet,

lodging and apparel than he doth himself, they would serve him gratis and merely to avoid shame; and we can be moved neither by love nor shame, nor fear nor gain, to follow the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Oh, that I were as faithful to Christ as was that young esquire to Jonathan! Do, said he, whatsoever seems good to thy mind; go whithersoever thou wilt, and I wil lwait upon thee through all. He forced his passage through rocks, through drawn swords, through the enemy's camp; and all this that the King's son might not go alone. But Jonathan mounted the hill creeping upon his hands and feet, and his esquire followed close after him. Why do we leave Christ to tread the wine-press alone, and nobody accompanies Him in His labours and sufferings. What we are ordinarily to undergo for Christ is nothing so formidable as what that esquire attempted for Jonathan. What soldier would desert his King in the midst of an enemy's army, and could have the face to return home well and jocund, and would not rather choose to fall by his side? And why do we leave Christ all alone? He complains not without reason, I have trod the wine-press alone, and of nations no one man assisted Me. Although a soldier by staying with his King could bring him no rescue, nor himself relief, yet he were not in duty to abandon him; how much less oughtest thou, since so great advantage accrues to thee, so great comfort to the King of Kings, Christ Jesus, in His sufferings, and the end intended is accomplished, which is His imitation. We must either renounce the name of a Christian, or embrace that which makes a Christian. If thou refuse to follow Christ, whom wilt thou follow? It can be no other than the prince of this world, the devil. He that traceth the footsteps of Jesus shuns

such a leader and guide, insomuch that he ought to do so only to shun him; he follows such a guide that he were to follow Him, although thereby he shunned no other evil; and how much more when these two are linked together, to follow what is best and shun what is worst, to follow God and shun the devil.

It is only long of our own malice that we do not what Christ did and taught. Nobody can excuse himself upon the pretence of impotency. Our salvation and perfection is placed in these things, which every one may have if he list; every one may be poor, every one may be patient; it is in every one's free choice not to be ambitious of honours. This is the wisdom and love of God, to make choice of those things that are obvious to all, and which all may compass with small labour. He excludes no man from His Kingdom, neither would He have any one want what is requisite for its purchase. If He had placed our salvation in honours, riches and pleasures, more would be damned than now are; for the number of the poor, ignoble and oppressed are without number, and in that case would yet be greater; for the more they were that sought to be rich and happy, the fewer would attain their desire. What then shall I now say to thee, if thou wilt not embrace the poverty, humility and Cross of Jesus, or seest not the incomparable good that is acquired by His imitation, but that this is it which He Himself saith, "He that follows Me walks not in darkness." Thou seest it not because thou walkest in darkness whilst thou followest another guide than Jesus.

CHAPTER XXV.

That necessities and afflictions sent by God are to be borne patiently.

If thou wilt not follow Christ, at least do not shun Him: if thou darest not imitate Him, how darest thou withstand and slight His similitude? It is an insufferable impudence and a miserable blindness, since the superabundant charity of God is so singularly beneficial to some, that it makes them, even whether they will or no, conform to His Son, not expecting that they labour in the business, lest perchance they faint in the combat, and yield to the difficulties of a voluntary assimilation to the life of Christ; but God deigns to do all by Himself, putting them in a condition of poverty, of humbling themselves, of undergoing labours and afflictions; nevertheless, they reject this opportunity, and are so far from coveting to resemble the Only-Begotten Son of God, that they are ashamed of all those things in which the Lord of glory did glory so much; and seek by all means to shun Jesus, Whom they are bound in duty to follow. They owe many thanks to God, for that without any pains or danger to themselves (for in that case one is secure from presumption or vainglory) they carry the similitude of His Only Son, in which He takes so much complacence, and out of an affectionate indulgence towards them, when He only calls others to His imitation, He

places them already in it. But they, ungrateful as they are, thwart His good intentions that they may resemble the proud Lucifer. Nay, they become more haughty than he, for Lucifer never thought himself better than God; but they, as if they were better and greater, when they behold Jesus guiltlessly punished, with all their guiltiness must remain untouched; and desire that themselves be better thought of, and deemed less worthy of punishment, than the most innocent Jesus, the least worthy of all. Why do we fret and chafe when any cross or adversity befalls us? For if it come through our own default, it is a high insolency for one to except against afflictions who is nocent, he seeing Christ undergo them Who is innocent. If no default occasioned them, let him yet rejoice more, because he more resembles Christ, Who was crucified faultlessly. Do not through impatience incur that blame in the sufferance which thou avoidest in the cause, being obliged to be thankful to God on a double score, both because thou art afflicted, and without desert innocently afflicted. When one is punished for his default, he must at least have patience; when without default, joy also; then reaps he a richer harvest of grace; there is a stricter similitude with the innocent Jesus, and hopes of a better advance, since this cross is not so much for amendment of what is past as for increase of future merits, and to be an antidote against ensuing infections. He must acknowledge the great indulgence of God towards him, which He used towards His own Blessed Mother, to wit, this preserving preservative. Christ suffered Himself to be nailed to the Cross for thee by the naughtiest of men; and why canst not thou brook with patience to be touched by God? a better and more benevolent hand molests thee.

A child when he is corrected by his parent, if he cry too eagerly is wont to be corrected again; and now he is beaten not so much for the first fault, as for the second, of his impatient crying: so when thou repinest at a cross or scourge which God is pleased to inflict upon thee, it happens many times that it is aggravated because thou murmurest, because thou complainest, because thou art quite out of patience. It is a fault great enough to deserve punishment, that thou contemnest the similitude of His Blessed Son, and thou wilt not acknowledge thy own faults, that thou art so void of patience. O King of Glory, on Whom the Angels delight to gaze! Thou didst not turn Thy face from those that smote Thee and spit upon Thee; Thy cheeks Thou permittedst to them that pinched them, Thou exposedst Thy Body to those that beat it, Thou expectedst nothing but revilement and misery for my sake, and why am I so wretchedly averse and a fugitive from Thee, my God and my Father, my Chastiser and my Benefactor? Rejoice, O my soul, in conforming thyself to the example of the Son of God in necessary poverty, tribulation, humility and disgrace. The Apostles went rejoicing from the sight of the council, because they were thought worthy to suffer a contumely for the name of Jesus. St. Paul Michi, a Japonian, of our Society, went rejoicing in the sight of the people, his ears being cut off for his greater ignominy, and he sent from city to city to be a subject of derision and infamy to all spectators; he, notwithstanding, laughed first at them, and put on such a cheerful countenance, so confident, so pleasant, so little dismayed, as if he had triumphed, for this sole resemblance with the Son of God; and he deserved to have that perfected even to the cross, which he embraced with great

alacrity. If thou wilt not comfort Christ by taking up His Cross, do not contristate the Holy Ghost by rejecting it; if thou canst not of thy own accord seek it, at least, when it is found and proffered thee, do not in vain refuse it. If Jesus, when in His journey to Mount Calvary He fell under His burden, had willed thee to bear it for Him, wouldst thou have denied Him that courtesy? What if He had laid it on thy shoulders with His own hands, wouldst thou have withstood Him and cast it off, or rather have kissed that horrid piece of wood, and adored those sacred hands that loaded thee? Certainly thou wouldst not only have been content to bear the Cross, but have earnestly sought and coveted to be crucified in His place. Behold God hath imposed upon thee the cross of this grief, of the humiliation, of this neediness—why dost thou reject it?—it is lighter than the Cross of Christ. If thou wilt not comfort Jesus by compassionating Him, comfort thyself in the compassionate Jesus.

O Comforter of souls, what can befall, me, whereof I shall not abundantly find redress in Thy necessities? If I be ill at ease, in Thee there was not a whole bit to be found from the sole of the foot to the crown of Thy head, a Man of sorrows and knowing infirmity. Thou didst truly bear our languors and carry our griefs. Am I hungry? Thou extended Thy fast even to forty days together, and felt such pinching gripes of hunger, that the devil persuaded himself that to assuage it Thou mightest be induced to sin. Am I thirsty? And so wert Thou also, and upon the Cross; neither was there anybody that offered Thee a refreshment. I am not in such a condition, and easily find those that afford me that courtesy. Am I cold? Thou didst quake and shiver when Thou lodgedst in the

manger. Am I disturbed in my repose? Thy Disciples did also awake Thee when Thou slept in the ship. Am I injured by any one? Thou pleading innocent wert sentenced to death. Am I affronted or suffer reproach? Thou wert publicly produced by Pilate in the view of all the people, he crying aloud, "Behold the Man!" Am I weary? Thou didst sit at the fountain quite tired with travelling about. Am I falsely accused? And so wert Thou also in the house of Caiphas. Am I rebuked for my good deeds? And Thou also for curing on the Sabbath. Am I slandered? They murmured against Thee that Thou cast out devils in the prince of devils. Am I mocked and derided? Thou wert also taunted and flouted at by those who said, He hath saved others, Himself He cannot save. Do I receive cross and harsh answers? Thou receivedst far harsher; and over and above a villanous servant gave Thee a box on the ear. Am I forsaken by my friends? Thou wert abandoned by Thy own Disciples. Do I depart from my kindred? Thou departedst from Thy Mother to go to Thy Passion. Am I slighted in my advice? Thy doctrine also both was and is contemned. Am I annoyed with temptations? Thou also wert pestered with them in the desert. Am I sorry for my brother's miscarriage? And Thou didst grieve for the apostacy of Thy Disciple become a renegade to truth. Am I sorry for my own defects? Thou beheldest them before me, and resentedst them. Do I feel want of devotion? Thou didst cry upon the Cross, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me! What distress then is there, either corporal or spiritual, of which we find not relief in Christ, first of all distressed for us? This is it which He saith, "Come to Me all ye that labour

and are burdened, and I will refresh you." O most sweet and comfortable promise, the very hearing whereof is so recreative! If Christ's labour doth ease ours, how much more will His glory do so? If His distresses be so effectual, what will His power and riches be? But I, most meek Lord, covet only Thy helping hand that I may suffer with Thee; not that Thou mayest comfort me in this life, in which my soul desires neither corporal nor spiritual joy, but only to suffer for and with Thee.

CHAPTER XXVI.

How purity of body helps the spirit.

He that dwells in a fenny and unwholesome country, what wonder if he be often ill-disposed; as on the contrary, he that breathes in a pure and sweet air, healthful: so a soul in an undefiled body is lusty and vigorous, in a foggy and corrupted one is drooping and sickly. The mind in unspotted and virgin flesh is as it were in a flowery and fragrant mead. Chaste bodies are the delight of God; what wonder if they be healthful to their souls? They let their mind attend wholly to God, free from disturbance of temporal things; they exhilarate the conscience in a loathsomeness of all sensual pleasures, loving God without let or obstacle. O my Love, O most pure and sincere Truth! I am indebted to Thee, O God, not only for the half of my heart, but for the whole; I will not only purify my mind, but also sanctify my body. We are members of Christ: let not one corrupted and unseemly limb

defile and misshape a most beautiful body. Who would prize the beauty of a graceful spouse, if she had a putrid nose, or a face and cheeks which were a receptacle of worms. Christ's glorified Body is a thousand times more pure and refulgent than the sun. O mortal man, thou art a member of the Immortal Christ. Consider how much thou oughtest to regard the sanctity of thy body, and to thy utmost imitate immortality and incorruption, lest thou be disagreeing from His purity. Thou art made one spirit and one flesh with Christ by the Communion of His most holy Body: do not defile thy own flesh, which by a wonderful kind of real union is become the flesh of Christ. Thou wouldst deem it no less than a sacrilege, if one should clothe the statue of a Saint in a spotted and nasty garment; why art not thou at least ashamed to defile that flesh which is a part of the living Christ, and add an obscene and polluted member to it? Thou thyself wouldst not wear a piece even of royal purple if it were steeped in dirt and clay; and why wilt thou wear thy own flesh stained so pitifully with filthy blemishes, and make it a part of Christ's Body?

As both our soul and body shall in the next life glorify God in unspeakable purity, so must we in this also strive to serve Him in cleanness of both. Thou must not only seek beatitude by the sanctity of thy soul, but must endeavour also to merit the felicity and resurrection of thy body by the sanctity of thy flesh, lest siding with thy mortal part, at the instigation of some pleasant object, thou sentence thyself to a perpetual death. But learn now so to behave thyself in flesh, as that thou mayest resemble the Angelical Spirits who shall neither marry nor be married. Learn now incorruptibility and the being of a single nature and a life abstracted from

all sense. Thy body must emulate the purity of the celestial Thrones, in whom God hath seated Himself, since it is the temple of the Holy Ghost, chosen to be a vessel of honour. We are the good odour of Christ. Christ breathes purity everywhere; His attendance is virginity, His delight chastity. In almost all the calamities of this world chastity was, as it were, a lenitive to God and a repairer of its damages. He found an excellent way of repairing the ruin of the Angels, chiefly and principally out of virgins and chaste persons, and by them: choosing a Virgin Mother and Precursor; having His Disciples and the peers of His Church, and the more eminent part of His Saints for the most part virgins, or living in continency, without either wives, or separated from them, and all of them most chaste; He mitigated the sad disaster of Adam's fall with the hopes of a Virgin that was to bruise the head of the Serpent; those whom He saved in the deluged world kept chastity while they were in the Ark; Christ solaced Himself upon the Cross with His Blessed Mother and His beloved Disciple, both virgins. How can He choose but love chastity and virginity, both His parents being virgins, and He having all His Being derived from virginity. Christ had a Virgin Father according to His Divine Nature, and a Virgin Mother according to His human. He would moreover have the type and substitute of His Father, to wit, St. Joseph, a virgin, though he were to bear only the name and title of parent. He made choice of two virgins, Abel and Isaac, for figures of His innocency and obedience. The first-fruits that were purchased by the Blood of the Lamb were virgins, and so they follow Him whithersoever He goes; whatsoever they do or say, imitating Christ and His modesty,

which was so rare that nothing was ever objected against Him in that behalf. And when the Jews invented many lies against Jesus, and heaped many aspersions upon Him without any show of probability, yet they never taxed Him with impurity, though they knew Him to have held conferences with women, by reason of His rare modesty and the shamefaced composure of His countenance, which alone cleared all suspicion and calumny of less exact chastity. A mean is chiefly to be observed in the sight; for, as St. Orontius admonisheth,

> Love, like those tears which wrongs do from us wrest,
> Breeds in the eye, but passeth to the breast.

From the eye to the heart is an easy and obvious passage. That venerable servant of God, Blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez, never beheld the face of a woman for the space of forty-seven years, nor anything else that was creative; to wit, the modesty of Christ's eyes in a certain apparition to him made such an impression in his heart all his life long, that their memory was sufficient to compose his; and by this means he preserved his heart in great purity, and joyed only interiorly in God. Do thou also shun exterior effusion if thou desirest internal and external purity.

CHAPTER XXVII.

That our practice of mortification must be continual.

Let no occasion slip of doing good and shunning evil: he that borrows an ass of another is not willing to keep him idle. One might doubt whether it were more conducible to tolerate evil or do good; but for me I am thoroughly persuaded that next after God, nothing is more regardable than that by which one is made acceptable both to God and His Saints. That indeed is the best of all, when one joining these two together, does good by treating himself ill. Let not, O afflicted spirit, the difficulties of virtue and importunity of thy passions contristate thee; rather rejoice in the occasion of merit. Assail and overcome. That merit is not so highly prized which is acquired by living peaceably, as that by living patiently, amidst the assaults of our perverse inclinations, in the solidity of our service, in violence and sufferance of ourselves, and the Cross of Christ. Take it not ill that thou art enriched by God with more numerous and fruitful instruments of merit than the Angels. He gave thee a body, that thou mightest have so many organs to merit, to wit, so many crosses as it hath senses and powers of the soul. He privileged thee above the Angels with that charge of thy body, and credited to thee the carrying of that muddy

lump of earth into Heaven. One only care was committed to the Angels, to preserve their spirit, which was a single one, sincere and entire; but a double burden was imposed upon the soul of man though of a feebler nature, both to raise itself and its troublesome flesh to an equality with the Angels and heavenly glory. It seemed somewhat unjust that the Angels who were in a ready equipage, expedite, free from all clog or carriage, and man who was retarded and loaded with the luggage of his body, and charged over and above with a thousand crosses, should be called to the same journey of Heaven; the soul especially being more imperfect and infirm than an Angel. But God's assisting grace can easily recompense the grievances which arise from the society of the flesh in order to merit, that it may equalize or surmount the dignity of Angels. If thou didst but know how to make use of thy massiness to thy advantage, it would rear thee much higher. Dancers, to make themselves nimbler, assume some weight by holding stones in their hands: thy body will help thee, if thou do but force it. This is no easy task, but a business of great contention; and the gain thou reapest from thy endeavour must animate thee against all occurrent difficulties. How many engines, and how much force is required to rear a great stone into a tower? And thou canst not raise thy massy lump of earth above the stars without violence, and the engine of the Holy Cross.

In this state of mortality, after the acomplishment of our redemption by the Son of God, Saints are no less eminent than they would have been in the state of innocency. Wherefore they become equally holy in this shortness of life as they would have been in the space of many ages, had men still re-

mained immortal. The multitude of afflictions together with the grace of Jesus recompenseth the multitude of years. The redemption of Christ was more copious than the damage we sustained by our prevarication; and yet for all that, He would not free us from the necessities and incumbrances of our flesh, nor wholly extinguish the rebellion of our appetites, lest He deprive His elect of a very compendious way of meriting; that by this means He might present them to His Heavenly Father in a shorter time, loaded with equal or greater merits than could otherwise have been acquired in many ages. He Who vanquished the world by the Cross, will have thee to vanquish thyself by the same. The copious grace of Christ triumphs most in a thwart and reluctant nature, and it helps itself by that very reluctancy to increase its merits. The stronger the enemy is, the more glorious the triumph; therefore it must not be burdensome to thee to be burdensome to thyself, but enjoy this thy violence and patience upon all occasions of meriting, in overcoming, in sacrificing, in crucifying thyself in all things. Let not the grace of Christ be idle and ineffectual in thee. Combat and cross is necessary to make thee good, whether thou wilt or no. Some great commanders after they had landed their men, burnt or destroyed their shipping, that all hopes of return being quite cut off, their soldiers might fight more resolutely. In the same manner God hath tied an enemy to us. Why do we hope to avoid all combat? The necessity of combating must necessitate us to victory and merit. Christ redeemed us by His Cross, and by it we must be saved, dying continually that we may live and vanquish by our patience. The way of salvation is rightly termed the way of perdition. Destroy and

seal up thy senses with the signet of Christ's Cross and they shall be in security; blindfold thyself, or rather put out thy eyes, and thy sight will be much better; become deaf, and thou shalt hear with facility; become mute, and thou shalt speak well; keep thyself fasting, and thou shalt relish well; be without hands and employment, and thou shalt labour well; be odious to thyself, and thou shalt love well; be dead to the world, and thou shalt live well; be fearful and thou shalt be secure; be contemptible to thyself, and thou shalt be honoured; be laborious, and thou shalt enjoy repose: sustain all evil, and so thou shalt possess all the good which is contained in the Cross.

O Truth, O most loving Jesus! if I love Thee, how can I hate that Cross which Thou lovedst so ardently? How can I shun that Cross which none but devils shun, who hate Thee? It is the devil's task to fly from the Cross; it is Christ's to die upon it. Let a Christian consider whether of these two he ought to imitate. Let him be sure to embrace self-victory and self-denial, and not divide himself for a trifling pleasure or the disturbance of a petty incommodity from Christ, depriving himself of so much merit and satisfaction. Do not go about to excuse thyself from that which is altogether inexcusable. Although thou be one of the elect, thou must suffer either in this life or in Purgatory, where patience is extremely barren. If one needs must suffer, judge whether it will be more commodious to do it in this life, where with light afflictions thou redeemest excessive torments and sins, and moreover gainest glory by increasing thy merits; or in Purgatory, where by vast sufferings thou makest but slender satisfaction, and meritest nothing at all besides. In Purgatory there is no merit, small

satisfaction, huge punishment; but in this life the punishment is extremely easy, the satisfaction great, and merit most ample. What merchant would buy wares at such a time when they are both worst and dearest, and not rather when he may have them in a manner for nothing?

But above all love to suffer for love of Christ. Is there any one, that having once embraced Him would relinquish Him for that cup of water which David poured upon the ground? Tell me, O thou lover and zealor of Jesus, if thou wert nailed on the other side of Christ's Cross, back to back with thy Beloved, crucified together with Him for the glory of God on Mount Calvary; and if some should make promise of belief in Him, and acknowledge Him for the Son of God, if He would descend, and He for all that would not desert thee, nor descend; and again, some other should offer thee, as one would do a child, a morsel of meat or an apple, as Eve did Adam, upon condition thou wouldst desert the company of thy beloved Jesus, wouldst thou really desert and abandon Him? Oh, our arrant shame and confusion! How often do we for a toyish pleasure, or the fulfilling of our perverse will, relinquish the Cross, and leave Christ to suffer all alone without the comfort of our company?

Go to, O my soul, redeemed by Christ upon the Cross, take up thy cross and follow thy Jesus, and deny thyself. Learn self-denial by what it is to deny another. He that is alienated from another, whether he be kinsman or friend, if he see him beaten, or in want, or imprisoned, he comes not to him, he succours him not, nor condoles with his distressed condition: and so must thou proceed with thy own body and stand affected towards it, as if an alien or enemy groaned under such a

calamity. It is not enough to take up thy cross, but thou must also deny thyself by dying upon the cross, on which thou must be crucified by dying with thy Jesus. In no desire of thy heart nor propension of sense must thou seek thy own content; even as he that is nailed to a cross hath not power to move any member as he listeth, nor do what his list suggesteth. One that were crucified would have small regard to things present, nor be solicitous for the future; he would not labour to hoard up riches nor bespeak pastimes, but would fix his eye only upon the other life, and though as yet living, reckon himself among the dead: in such a condition must he be that is crucified with Christ. He must also number himself among the dead, not only defunct to the pleasures and vices of this life, but even to life itself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

On the sufficiency and good of poverty.

He that hath God, what needs he seek anything else? or how can he but be ashamed to have or court anything besides? One that had costly furniture or a rich cupboard of plate would be far from keeping an earthen dish among it, choosing rather to break it in a thousand pieces than it should be a blemish to the rest, and an eye-sore to them that behold these rarities, and make them laugh at the owner's rusticity. O Infinite Majesty and unparalleled Beauty! how dare I be so bold as to hang any terrene thing at Thy girdle, and possess it together with Thee? All the hearts of men who ever have been, are, or shall be, all the wills of the Seraphim or other celestial Spirits, suffice not to employ or exhaust His immensity; and why then do I, a silly imp, employ my heart, which is but one, and a narrow one, upon other things, and not rather disengage it from all to give it entirely to Him? If I have anything besides Him, I neither possess it fully nor Him; if I have nothing but Him, I not only possess Him, but all things also together with Him. Who can be found so little a friend to his own advantage, that if he could gain a thousand crowns for a hundred would not willingly employ his money? Can any one think God less valuable than a thousand crowns? Why then are not men

content to exchange for Him, I will not say a hundred crowns, but even toys and trifles which cleaving to our heart extinguish devotion; and sometimes expel Him thence, or like a brazen wall, obstruct His entrance. Oh, the inestimable value of poverty, which breaks down these barriers of our heart, that God may enter into man; and unlocks the gates of Heaven, that man may enter into it and God!

If one should make this proffer to a Gentile void of faith, who stood ravished with the visible beauty of the stars and magnitude of the heavens, what wouldst thou give to contemplate these fair creatures for a day's space nigh at hand, and even touch with thy fingers the matter they are made of? Would he not give all he were worth, at least out of curiosity, to be among them for a little time, or at leastwise that a piece of a star might be shown him upon earth; and how much more ought we to give and do that we may be carried up to Heaven, not to behold them for one day, but possess them for all eternity, and reign there like so many princes? And how much more estimable is it, that thou hast God descending to thee upon the earth and residing in thee, than if one should once show thee a fragment of the sun? If this be so, what reason can we yield of so great madness in contemning spiritual things and doting upon temporal, but because of our faith being so weak and languid? which if it were lively and vigorous, the first time we hear that saying of Christ—"Blessed are the poor of spirit, because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," the last syllable should no sooner be pronounced but we should forthwith renounce whatsoever is in our possession.

Oh, our shame and confusion! There have been

some philosophers who have relinquished all their goods, gold, silver, and whatsoever else for this sole end, that with less disturbance they might contemplate this material heaven; and we refuse to quit mere toys to become lords of the empyrean. Ethnics, though they denied the immortality of the soul, did preach up and choose poverty, even out of a temporal motive, that they might rid themselves of all cares; and we, neither from any commodity of this life, nor hopes of an eternal, can be induced to embrace this virtue. Thou esteemest content of mind and temporal repose more than all the kingdoms of the world; how much more oughtest thou to value eternal content, and above all, God Himself? One should make a most rich purchase, if he gave all the treasure of Crœsus, the revenues of Solomon, the Empire of Augustus, for one buffet for God's sake; and why dost not thou buy of God at a much cheaper rate the kiss of friendship, His sweet embracements, His Beatifical Vision? When Adam was cast out of Paradise, and a guard placed at its entrance with a flaming and two-edged sword, if he had been hopeless of a Redeemer, but were able to bribe the Cherubim with money for a return to his ancient and happy state, where he lived in such poverty that he was not worth a suit of apparel, would he not willingly have given all he had in the world, so fertile with briars and watered with his sweat? How much more industrious must we now be to come to the glory and fruition of God—to gain and possess God Himself? Shall we perchance be more excusable for having a Redeemer, since for this respect we are much more obliged, if we be capable of gratitude, to imitate Him and follow His admonitions, and believe His words, Who said that it was harder for a rich man

to enter into Heaven, than for a camel to pass through a needle's eye.

O most amiable Lord, if Thou be the reward of poverty, take what is mine, and in the first place myself. I wish I were so poor that I were not owner of myself; for he is rich enough who hath himself, since he is master of a man. He that hath relinquished other things and not himself, doth no great feat in contemning those things which are of themselves but earth and dust, which for the most part contain some evil, and by which we become evil, the compassing whereof is full of vexation, the possession of fear, the deprivement of sorrow. It is no great business to leave those things that otherwise will leave us, and in the interim are many ways hurtful. Thou, O Lord, becoming Man, gavest Thyself to man for man, that by such traffic Thou mightest gain man, and not the riches of man: man must render himself into Thy hands, and not esteem himself more valuable than God. It is a high piece of injustice for man to deny himself to God, Who bought him at so dear a rate. Man must set a true estimate upon God, and compensate for the injury He suffered by Judas, who rated Him only at thirty pence. A Christian must prize Christ more than the whole world, and a creature rate God higher than itself. He that relinquisheth other things and not himself, is so far from lessening his desire, that oftentimes he more augments it. Privation causeth an appetite, and want stirs up desire. All things are only a just price for Him that is all. All things must be abandoned in which man himself is concerned; for if one retain an appetite, though he relinquish the thing itself, his smothered desire will soon revive.

We must not only relinquish the things them-

selves, but the very desire of them. It is not enough to abandon what thou hast, but thou must moreover not seek anything else, nor accept of what is offered or given thee, nor, as much as may be, even borrow things for thy use. It is not the propriety, but use of things, that is noxious. Let it be grateful to thee to have less than the rest, avoiding singularity, which is a stumbling block of ill-example, laid to the detriment and overthrow of the rest. It is a singular beast, or beast of singularity, which wastes and depopulates the vineyard of our Lord. Many religious men are less cautious in this behalf. They think their spirit not disquieted so long as they feel no anxiety nor desire; but when anything is profferred and given without perceivance of these in themselves, they deem themselves free from all danger, especially when they are not further annoyed with solicitude of other things. But they are not out of danger; for although there be none in acquiring the thing, yet there is in the use and possession of it. The things themselves cause an appetite of other things; wherefore although the man himself have no desire of others, yet the things themselves have, and they stir up an appetite in their possessor: for one thing is always craving another. Besides, if thou hast relinquished thy own, why wilt thou have another man annul thy fact? that which thou approvest as conform to the doctrine of Christ, why makest thou another to disapprove? It is because thou intendest to dismiss and relinquish again what is now given thee. Thou mayest make a shorter cut than this by not taking it. The chiefest praise of poverty consists not in leaving much, but in having nothing, and reserving nothing for his own use. Why was the glory and commendation of the Apostles so eminently great?

Was it perchance because they abandoned their poor fishing-nets, or rather because they retained nothing, for that indeed is to relinquish all? If another importune thee to take anything, thy poverty must contend with his liberality: thou wilt prove thyself a poltroon if thou be overcome. Thy own poverty overcame thy liberality, why cannot it do so to another's? Thou didst rather choose to be poor and needy than reserve anything of thy own wherewith to be liberal. Why preferrest thou another's liberality before thy own poverty? Would he be thought to give good advice who should say, "Keep this, that thou mayest not abandon all." No, certainly; neither must thou acquiesce to his suggestions, which are repugnant to the counsel of Christ. Suppose him that gives to speak in like manner. Beware thou yield not, but having forsaken thy own, do not accept of what is another's; but contemn for the love of God those things also which thou hast not, nor art in possibility of having. Such a love of poverty is wont to be engendered in the servants of Christ, that if even Jesus Himself, for whose sake they quitted all, should restore them something, or command them to possess the goods of this world, they would reply and appeal to the throne of His mercy, as deeming that too great a punishment.

O how rich will he be, who is so poor of spirit, that not so much as in affection he covets anything of this world! For as soon as he hath made this renouncement of worldly treasures in his heart, he transfers them into Heaven; becoming lord of them and selling them to Christ, without any prejudice at all either to him that owns them or that hath them in use. Such a one is strangely enriched by those things which neither are his nor ever shall be,

having treasures in Heaven and no want upon earth; for poverty is not burdensome to him that loves it, but full of sweetness and content; unsavoury only to them that hate and inveigh against it, and what wonder if it be offensive to its persecutors and enemies. Nevertheless it is hurtful to none, but good to all; for it is no hindrance at all to those who contemn all from their heart for God; and very advantageous to those that gape after terrene commodities, making them even against their wills forbear a great many sins, which in plenty they would have committed plentifully. Wherefore although it seem to such bitter and distasteful, yet they cannot deny it to be extremely beneficial.

CHAPTER XXIX.

That patience is necessary in all occasions.

Patience is a thing to be wished above all others: thou must regard it more than thy life; for there is a greater necessity of suffering than can be of living. Thou art not born to live easefully for a time, but thou livest that thou mayest suffer for a time, and thou sufferest for a time that thou mayest live eternally. Thou art born to a life which shall not be interrupted; it is requisite then that in this its interim thou suffer without interruption. This life is not for itself: for neither do passengers travel that they may only be said to be in motion: we live for a more sublime end. What is this life but to toil and labour, to which man is born, that by it he may purchase beatitude. God could have created us in glory. What needed we fetch such a circuit about, and pass through so many windings, unless we were to go by the path of suffering? Give credit to what I now say, and register it in the book of thy heart: nothing is more necessary to life than patience, because nothing is more obvious in it than sufferance. In troubles which cannot be avoided, it is a lenitive, and assuageth grief, which impatience augmenteth. Thou mightest have some pretext for being impatient, if thy impatience, would ease the affliction, but it is a thing beyond all excuse to forfeit the

ample fruits of patience, which thou mightest reap almost out of every action and adversity, without any fruit at all. Do not omit nor perform thy virtuous exercises perfunctoriously, by reason of any incumbrances of this life, or the hard measure thou hast from men; for it would be esteemed injustice to make God pay for an injury done thee by man. God, Who is innocent, must not satisfy for the default of the nocent.

If thou inure thyself to take these tribulations patiently, thou shalt become after a manner impassible, and a lover of afflictions. Fire doth not burn ashes, nor suffer they any harm from it; they rather love the fire, foment and help to its conservation: so the more patient one is, the more joy many times, by a certain Divine privilege, doth he feel in his greatest pressures. Patience doth not lessen the labour but the pain, and that is enough. It is so deserving at our hands, that it will not defraud us of any part of our merits, but only assuage the noisomeness of the affliction; and so it hath found a means to make us both enjoy the fruits of our labours and not be contristated with the labours themselves. God takes complacence in nothing almost more than in sending adversities, confusions, humiliations, to him that is truly patient, because He loves most cordially one that is thus thoroughly mortified, and enricheth His friends with merits, whose harvest is in labours and afflictions. God shows no greater argument of love, nor imparts any gift with more tenderness and affection of heart than labours and the bitter Cross of His Blessed Son: and nothing ought to be higher than this in thy desires. The most loving Heart of Christ expected revilement and misery: and how canst thou be His disciple if thou hate

and shun it? Seek not to be loved by God upon other motives than was His only beloved Son; nor covet to affect anything besides what He loved and affected.

Thou wilt not be patient enough unless thou desire practice of patience, which is sufferance. Thou wilt be but half patient if thou only bear the wrong done thee, unless thou be also ambitious of them; but this without any other's default. To what end makest thou thy complaints? The true patient speaks not of his wrongs, nor makes rehearsals of his aggrievances to another, because he placeth not his comfort in excuses and condolements, but stands indifferent whether his griefs be eased or no. Why resentest thou so heavily to supply what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ? He for the glory of God would not only endure scourges and the Cross, but in desire and preparation of mind He coveted all the afflictions of all men; and this very anguish that now annoys thee, which was wanting to His Passion, that is, to the most ardent desire of greater sufferance and of all torment imaginable. Rejoice that thou endurest this for Christ, who oughtest to deem it an inestimable favour to receive one stripe that it might not be inflicted on Him; but if thou brookest this slight affliction, which was wanting to His desire, with patience, Christ will take content in it, and thou wilt afford Him no small comfort. O most loving Jesus, why am I afflicted in my tribulations, if I have this solace, that Thou art solaced by them? Thou didst seek, O Lord, some one who would condole with Thee, and couldst find none: behold me here of my own accord, I will be afflicted and sorrow with Thee, that I may be a companion of Thy sufferings and death. Oh, who will grant me

that I may die with Thee, O Son of God! And if Thou be pleased to send me only this light tribulation, why do I refuse to be lightly afflicted for Thee? Others solace themselves if only some men be joint-sufferers with them; why should not I solace myself, if I be joint-sufferer with God. This is enough for me; neither do I covet the compassion of men. I will grieve no more, O Lord, that I see myself alone injured, myself alone contemned; nay this shall be a comfort to me, that besides the fellowship of my suffering Jesus, I suffer all alone, and behold none of my brethren involved in the like distress. O my Jesus, I find nothing in this tribulation which gives me just subject of complaint. Why shall I esteem what is done to me a contempt, if with Thee it be reputed a dignity? Why shall I esteem it an injury, if Thou reckon it one of Thy favours?

Who would not think himself well-sped, if being in a continual expectancy of death for an impeachment of high treason, he be only fined in a pecuniary mulct, or suffer forfeiture of his estate; would he take it impatiently, or think himself hardly dealt withal, and not rather judge himself worthy of congratulation? Thou, O sinner, art guilty of treason against the Divine Majesty; thou deservest to be punished with fire either in hell or at least in Purgatory. Why dost thou not take it in good part, if in lieu of that, a pecuniary fine be only set upon thee by loss of thy temporalities or decrease of thy reputation, or some other commodity or worldly respect. He that were to suffer death on a public gibbet, if he chanced to be reprieved by reason of some sickness, he would not a little rejoice, although the disease were very painful; yea, he would wish it of long continuance; in which case, nevertheless,

the penalty is not pardoned, but only procrastinated. And why dost thou repine at this light fit of sickness, if by it thou escape eternal death, because it stirs thee up to compunction, or at least the pains of Purgatory?

Be mindful upon all occasions of the patience and fellowship of thy suffering Jesus, that it may make thee bear injuries, and stand in a true contempt of thyself. If that suffice not, remember how patient the Divinity is in tolerating the sins of men. We contemn God even to His face, and offend Him in His very presence; yea, even while He cherisheth us in His bosom and carries us in His arms; nor for all that doth He cast us thence, or annihilate us, but makes His sun rise equally upon the good and the bad. Who would hold a lighted candle to an enemy lying in wait to ensnare and undo him, that he might use its light to his undoing, and would not rather forthwith put it out? Oh, the wonderful patience and humility of the Divinity! which is both as obsequious to its contemners as any servant, and while we contemn Him, provides us sustenance, and ripens and seasons the delicious fruits of the earth, that we may fare both plentifully and deliciously.

CHAPTER XXX.

What a great good it is to be subject to another.

O Inscrutable Wisdom! what thanks can I render Thee for communicating thyself to me, so ignorant, by a holy and humble obsequiousness, which is the highest providence and knowledge of man? It is proper to the Divine Wisdom to be inerrable in all; and the obedient is always such while he humbly obeys the commands of his superior. Oh, how great and discreet a prudence is the obedience of the simple, regarding all with an indifferent eye! How great a blessing must it needs be amidst the darkness which our passions induce, and the labyrinths of error which our concupiscence weaves, and the ignorances into which the depraved conversation of men and the customs and practices of the world lead us, to hold the right way, and be guided most securely without fear of error, no otherwise than if we were steered by a heavenly conduct and discretion. The invention of holy obedience effects this, which is the vicegerent of the Divine Wisdom, the profitablest compendium of prudence. What greater sign of wisdom can be imagined, than to be secure from error in all his undertakings? Prudence must lead the way to other virtues, and that is not acquired but with great difficulty; but sincere obedience is an easy purchased prudence. The subject hath this pre-

eminence above his superior, that he cannot err in his function. A superior in commanding may err and be faulty, but an inferior in obeying cannot. Well may a superior command imprudently, but a subject in obeying cannot go against prudence, unless when that which is commanded is a manifest sin ; and in that case it were not so much a precept as a temptation. A prelate may be defective in commanding, but not the obedient; because in obeying he cannot but do the Will of God. The obedient man is always secure and assured of the Divine Will. Although what is enjoined be contrary to the Will of God, not approving such an injunction, he nevertheless that obeys works according to His Will, sometimes much more meritoriously. A superior may be naughty and command naughtily ; but because it is always in our power to obey well, so long as no evil thing is imposed, each superior is to be loved, yea, and an evil one to be tolerated ; there accruing thence a twofold merit both of charity and patience. A subject may sometimes persuade himself that his own dictamens are more conducing to the good of his soul than the precepts of his superiors ; but for all that he must not omit to comply with his injunctions ; for nothing can be more advantageous, than out of the motive of charity to relinquish and abandon his own will and judgment.

There can be no safer conduct than that of obedience ; and, therefore, shutting the eyes of our mind we must without reply do what is enjoined, supplying by a prompt and affectionate will, what our understanding is not bound to discuss. Obedience is such a welcome and rich commodity that no syllogistical discourses are required to induce us to it. Obedience is a most evident inspiration from

God, and an unquestionable revelation, wherein one cannot doubt whether it be from God or no. If thou beheldest an Angel approaching thee, and denouncing God's will concerning the performance of any good work, thou wouldst not be slow in compliance with it though it were accompanied with great difficulties. Thou must be more prompt in accomplishing thy superior's commands, because thou mayest be more secure of God's will in what man commands, than in what an Angel. And therefore a man's injunction being once made, there needs no great business of consideration nor tergiversation, but the greatest praise is in a speedy execution. But after the denouncement of an Angel, one ought to consider who it is that treats with him, whether a spirit from God or the devil; whether what he commands be good, or the opposite better. One would take it for a great favour if in all his actions it were suggested to him by some Seraph sent from God what we were to do, this or that; and it is no less profitable for us to obey God in man His substitute and our superior, he being as secure a domestic oracle as if one were immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost. There are two primary causes of sin, inconsiderateness of mind and depravedness of will. Obedience annuls both these; for the obedient submits to another's judgment, and by doing so not only supplies but exceeds the advantages of self-consideration and prudence; and that his will may not be distort, he regulates it by the Will of God, endeavouring conformity in all his proceedings.

Oh, what a comfort it is to one that loves Thee, O Jesus, to operate not only to please Thee, but because it is pleasing to Thee! This is the prerogative of obedience, that the obedient is not frus-

trated of some reward, which he not only expects from the work, but which he finds in it, he obtaining his end in the beginning, that is to please God ; and this depends not on any future thing, it being anticipated by obeying. O most welcome task of obedience! why do any complain or seek to be excused from it, for this reason, that if they obey with humility and promptitude more is enjoined them ; for superiors are wont to be more forward in commanding them that are most prompt in complying with their commands? It is a very fond complaint when we complain of what we ought to wish for. A King is thought to do one a favour if he commit any business to his trust ; and the more and weightier they are, the greater is the favour esteemed. If God proceed after this manner with us, why do we complain? Masters for the most part employ those servants about their commands, who are most dear and intimate with them, and of whose fidelity they have good proof ; and why do we resent that God treats us as such? O God of my heart, if thou heldest this favourable manner of proceeding with Thy own Son in this world, Who was obedient even unto the death of the Cross, shall I dare presume that any favour will be showed me of a higher strain? O Jesus! Thou Who becamest obedient in all, grant that I may never refuse any compliance with obedience. Thou achievedst all by being obedient, from Thy nativity to Thy very death: Thou wert no less subject to Cæsar and Pilate than to it. There was also a time when Thou wouldst subject Thyself to the powers of darkness, giving way to the devils, and permitting Thyself with great obedience to the fury of hell in the executioners and malice of the Jews ; and because Thou couldst not become Incarnate by it, Thy Humanity being not

as yet existent, Thy Mother supplied for this, she conceiving Thee by that rare act of obedience and submission of mind.

O most welcome task of obedience! since it is most certain that nothing is better or more grateful to God. Adam withdrawing himself from it knew good and evil. Obedience is most innocent; it not only knows not good and evil, but is also ignorant of good and better; for all the works of obedience are in the superlative degree, that is, best; in comparison of which the acts of other moral virtues carry no comparison in this, that none of them is to be preferred before commands; for though one practise all the rest, but yet do against obedience, they all avail nothing, yea, he does evil. But if he omit them for it, he shall have the merit of them all. The obedient man knows no such comparative discourses, as, It is better to do this than that; but that it is best to do what is commanded. He that hath obedience hath all other virtues in a compendious abridgment; he that is obedient will be both chaste and a lover of poverty. Adam after he became refractory felt presently the stings of the flesh, and sought a garment to conceal them; while he was obedient he was most chaste and remained a virgin; and being content with his own nakedness, he stood in an exact poverty. O most welcome obedience to him that is emulous of virtue, and makes God the sole object of his love!

Comfort thyself, O my soul, who covetest and longest so much to see His Face which the Angels love to contemplate; comfort thyself in the interim, and reverence thy superior, whosoever he be, as an apparent Christ and visible God. God is not worshipped in Himself only, but in every superior also. Persuade thyself that the Divine Goodness in its

eternal Love and Providence hath ordained and decreed thee this Prelate, that by him and no other He might communicate His grace, and enroll thee one of the predestinate. God's authority resides in him; inquire not why he commands this or that. God's Will stands for a reason; and so it must be in him who is here His vicegerent. Why demandest thou a reason for putting thyself into the hands of God? Tell me, what was the reason He created not another man, who perchance would have been better, when He created thee and gave thee to thyself? If thou canst not assign any, why demandest thou one for resigning thyself to God with all the latitude of thy will? It is an unspeakable glory and content to the heavenly spirits to be always praising God; but it is far more considerable to be the property of God than to praise Him with your mouth.

CHAPTER XXXI.

How great harm proceeds from daily and light defects.

Why dost thou contemn in thy own soul what men affect so much in their bodies, they providing not only for life's maintenance, but also for health and comeliness. It would be held an insufferable misery to be always sick, and a horrid deformity to have one's body composed of man and beast. Thou must not only stand in horror of great sins, but also dread the very desires and thoughts that are culpable, yea, any imperfection. How unseemly an object would it be, if a serpent's mouth stood upon thy face? and yet every small word whether but lightly detractive, or offensive, or idle, is far more deformed. O Truth, O immense Goodness! I beg of Thee by the merits of Christ, that Thou wilt remove this veil from before my eyes, that I may thoroughly know how stupendous an evil is involved in the malice of the least default! O man, how monstrous a creature wouldst thou seem to the eyes of men, if thou shouldst at any time appear with the head of an ox or horse in thy human body! and yet it is far worse if before God and His Angels thou conceive in thy soul, deified by Divine grace, disproportioned and idle thoughts of terrene things, and a brutish longing after thy own commodity; nay, there is more proportion betwixt a man's body

and that of a beast, which are in the same degree or order of things, than there is betwixt grace and any sin even the smallest. Wherefore the deformity of the least venial defect exceeds all monstrosity and corporal misshapedness whatsoever, not only what is now extant, but also imaginable or possible. I beseech thee, O zealot of Christ, by His most sacred Blood, pause here awhile and ponder what I say with an unbiassed judgment; and thou who wouldst not have the least blemish in thy body, permit not to thy utmost these monsters in thy soul, the spouse of Jesus. Employ all the faculties of thy mind, set all the inventiveness of thy imagination on work, and frame a deformity as ugly as thou canst, and such a misshapedness as the very thought of it will fill thee with dread and horror, and this will be small in comparison of the deformity of a small offence. The more excellent a thing is, the more we resent its corruption; and crookedness proves there the greatest eye-sore where straightness is most required: what more excellent than our mind and will which is in an eminent degree above any other creature's? Wherefore its least defect is very ugly, neither can understanding, human and angelical, penetrate to the full the harm it causeth to a soul. What a prodigious thing would it be if thou carriedst thy heart in thy belly and not in thy breast? It is a greater prodigy that a soul made to love God should covet pleasures or deform itself with the intemperance of gluttony, or neglect in any other depraved affection.

Thou must have a horror not only of enormous sins, but also of all venial, which are esteemed little material, and falsely named petty ones. That is not justly styled light and little, which only hath above it another which is great. A venial defect is not

little, which hath only above it another greater, that is a mortal one; yea, for this reason it is to be thought great, because it hath above it but one evil which is greater. Men esteem not only death evil, and dread it as such, but also a severe or a deadly wound. That must needs be a vast evil which is only less than one evil which is greater than all others, wants, disgraces, sicknesses, torments, and hell itself; it is a vast evil, greater than which or equal, God neither knows nor can inflict, although He should heap all the punishments of the damned upon thee.

Thou wouldst think it insupportable to have a canker which rotted and consumed thy limbs: what if other diseases much greater were added to this, leprosy, stoppage of breath, the palsy, dropsy, loathing of the stomach, the gout, blindness, frenzy, dumbness, extinction of natural heat? One sole venial sin is more hurtful than all these. Venial sin is a canker; it spreads insensibly even to death, inducing many others, and at length a mortal, unless the depraved affection be cut off. It is a leprosy, debarring the scabby and loathsome soul of the embracements of her Spouse: it is a stoppage, causing difficulty of breathing after heavenly things and of admitting Divine inspirations, grieving and contristating the Holy Ghost: it is a palsy, retarding the nimble motions of our mind towards God, and making us dull and stupidly insensible in the Divine service: it is a dropsy, begetting a thirst and high conceit of temporal things, and a neglect of Divine and wholesome ones: it is a loathsomeness of stomach, causing aversion from spiritual affairs: it is a gout, impeding us in the advancement of a virtuous progress: it is a blindness, making us dim-sighted in the knowledge of

truth and heavenly goods, veiling our eyes with fond worldly principles as if a thick mist were cast before them: it is frenzy, making the soul go out of her right wits—what greater frenzy imaginable, than that he, whom the King, to honour him, to have him his courtier, yea, and adopt him for his son, had clad in a royal purple, should go dip it in a dirty puddle, and then ridiculously appear in his presence? In like manner, one that is vested with Divine grace and the purple of God, defiles himself with venial sin, and though he be not stript of that precious robe, yet he pitifully bedaubs and misuseth it, and dares in this pickle appear before the Angels, and come into the presence of God. Venial sin is also a deprivement of speech, rendering our prayers so ineffectual that we deserve not to be heard, nor obtain redress at the hands of Heaven: it is a wasting consumption, disabling the mind to resist the devil: it is a decay of vital heat, much diminishing the fervour of charity. Can that be little which is the cause and source of so great evils? How can a soul in this equipage desire to repose in the bosom of her Spouse? If we should spoil our apparel with spittle or dirt, yea, although it were only wet with fair water, we would presently put it off and lay it aside, refraining to appear in it before company: how then can we have patience, not with our apparel, but ourselves, who are nasty, sordid, defiled, diseased, and yet even thus we covet the embracements of God, never thinking of being first cured or putting ourselves in better array? If thou wouldst be content, on condition of being cured of any of the aforesaid diseases, suppose it were the canker alone, nay, out of hopes of being cured, though with hazard, to have some limb cut off; how much more to be cured of them all? O

the stupidity of man! who is so insensible of so many maladies that befall his soul, and procures not, what in him lies, an easy and obvious remedy in order to a certain and invaluable recovery of its health from so many dangerous diseases, since for the uncertain recovery of his body he spares neither limbs nor any kind of torment.

Go to, silly fool; be sure in the first place to provide for thy soul, and use as much caution as thou canst by avoiding venial sins not to incur so many diseases, and for that end be sparing neither of care nor industry. Thou mayest conjecture the greatness of the malady by the difficulty of the cure. Behold what a medicine Purgatory, which is the hospital of such diseased souls, applies to them. Can it be little which must be cured with that fire and such bitter torments? Would one suspect that fault little for which he sees a nice and tender woman tormented in a flaming furnace for an hour's space, and that by the command of her most indulgent and affectionate spouse? Certainly either her spouse might be thought some furious fellow, or the fault was highly displeasing. Why do we esteem venial defects of small concern, for which God, Who is so loving and merciful towards men, will have souls so dear to Him to lie days and years in scorching flames without the least resentment of compassion? Either God is very unjust and cruelly bent, or the least offence is a fearful irreverence and vast ingratitude. Thou, O Lord, art no tyrant, but an humble lover of souls, and Thy mercy is above all Thy works. This my impudency, too, too enormous and stupendous, which Thou, Who art most just, most meek and humble of heart, Who wouldst be glad to remit much of that pain, art forced to correct with so

much severity, lest Thou prove defective in point of justice.

If one should behold a dog struggling in the midst of flames and perishing in a burning pile, he would be touched with a sense of compassion; and how much more if he did see his own child in such a calamity? O most merciful Father, how can that venial fault be termed little, which is unseemly for Thee to compassionate, though Thou seest Thy own children by grace, whom Thou affectest so tenderly, so scorched and tortured in that piaculary furnace? And yet for them it was Thou gavest Thy life and precious Blood. Neither paternal bowels replenished with pity, nor infinité wisdom was wanting in Thee. Thou art not an ignorant God, Who canst be deceived in the estimate of a fault, nor a cruel one, Who takest content in punishing but against Thy will. Wherefore if Thou tormentest him so rigorously whom Thou lovest so tenderly, it must needs be a vast evil towards which mercy itself is so unmerciful.

Let us imagine a man void of all knowledge of hell or Purgatory, and beholding only by revelation the state of some one soul pitifully afflicted by those flames for a venial sin, but wholly ignorant what might occasion such a punishment: what, I beseech thee, would he guess to cause it—any small or petty trifle, or rather some huge exorbitancy, which so benign a God resolved to chastise with so much rigour?

Again, shall that be termed little which He in this life punisheth with the greatest of all punishments, death? If God cannot err in inflicting penalties, since He inflicts so dreadful ones how great must that needs be, for which He inflicts them? Behold, for one venial sin He punished

His own servants, Moses and Aaron, with death; for one venial sin also, as is probably thought, Oza and Lot's wife were suddenly struck with the like disaster. For one venial sin the Abbot Moses was delivered over to the devil, and for a space possessed by him; and in very deed it were a less evil to have a thousand legions of devils in one's body and be vexed by them, than to have the least venial sin in his soul, and take complacence in it. The devil laboured tooth and nail for forty years together to make a certain servant of God commit but one venial trespass. Is the devil such a fool that he would wait and lie in ambush so long to surprise him for a matter of small moment? Why shall not we be watchful at least one day to avoid so great mischief? O most pure Truth, purify my impure spirit from such an evil, and illuminate me, that I may not esteem it light because I regard it but lightly, since the devils themselves take it so to heart, but let me esteem that great which is done against a God so great; nor let me repute that contemptible and slight, which I, a contemptible, slight, and inconstant creature, commit by sinning on all occasions and constantly; but therefore let me hold it great, because I who am vile and contemptible, dare do it against a God the best and greatest.

How great must that needs be, which rather than we must but once commit deliberately, it is better to embrace a thousand deaths, it is better that heaven and earth returned to their first nothing, and all mankind were sentenced to damnation. If choice were given to the Virgin Mother, while she stands at the foot of the Cross bewailing the torments and death of her beloved Son, whether she would have Him released from these pains and

disgraces, and behold Him presently seated at the right hand of His Father, and the salvation of a thousand worlds accomplished at that instant, by consenting to one sole venial sin, she would choose not to do it, and would also persuade me to do so too; nay, rather than this, she would choose to see her Son and the Son of God once more nailed to the Cross, yet without any default at all, and if it were needful and lawful would strike in the nails with her own pious hand, and sacrifice Him with greater charity than Abraham did his. Tell me, I pray, would it be a slender courtesy and comfort to the Virgin and her Jesus, if some one man were found who would put himself upon the Mount Calvary in the room of Christ, and be crucified and suffer in His stead? Persuade thyself for all this that they would rather desire a greater comfort at thy hands, which is to eschew all venial sin. Consider now whether that would be little which should preponderate such a piece of service; nor do thou deny this solace to thy suffering Christ and His compassionate Mother. Let us then cancel and abolish this opinion, that that evil can be light or little, which the Virgin, Christ, and God His Father, deem so great and punish so exemplarily.

That is not little which hinders things ordered to a great and sublime end; which lessens the love of God in this life and delays His vision in the other. It is no small rub which puts as it were a stop and let to the most speedy and powerful mercy of God and His desires. Would it be accounted a small violence that should suspend a mill-stone falling from heaven in the air while it were posting to the earth, its centre? It is therefore no small sin which suspends the Divine munificence, and the ardent desires of an enamoured soul, that they

cannot reach their centre, God, and the promised holy land of beatitude, but detains it in the flames of Purgatory. That is not a little displeasing to God which hinders Him from giving out of hand what He hath such a mind to give, and we so willingly would receive. That is not little which stops the current of God's great favours, and even in this life obstructs the outlets of His profuse liberality. Let us tremble at such an evil, and to the very utmost of our power use all possible diligence to avoid it; not enduring to brook the shame and disgrace which the name of a fault imports.

How can that soul take complacence in the name of a servant, or a child, or a spouse, which is not careful to please God and comply in all things with His Sacred Will? How naughty a servant would he be thought that would do nothing as he ought, unless his master, threatening death, stood over him with a drawn sword, and can upon no other terms, neither by fair means nor foul, be brought to his duty? How untoward a child who is always crossing his parent, and seeks to please him no further than merely to keep himself from being disinherited; for the rest, is wholly reckless in accomplishing his will and desire, and is led in all by a spirit of contradiction? How disloyal a spouse, who should only so far forth show herself faithful and loving to her fellow-spouse as not to provoke him to take her life; in other things perpetually crossing and vexing him; and were she never so often corrected, showed no signs at all of amendment? What argument of love would it be in a child or spouse to say, I really love my parent or fellow-spouse, but little regard notwithstanding what affront I put upon him besides death or a deadly wound; I will uncontrollably do what I think good, nor ever labour to humour him

further, than may serve to save my life and secure my inheritance? Who could have patience with one that should speak thus and do accordingly? Just thus proceeds he who contemns venial sins, and serves God merely to avoid the death of his soul, or forfeiture of Heaven by a mortal. Is there, think you, any master of a family to be found who would give house room to such a servant, or son, or spouse? This is the prodigious patience of God, Who tolerates us even while we abuse His toleration.

Let us then not misprize these faults as little, which although they were so, yet are they many, and God is great and but one. Grains of sand are but small, yet they may be so multiplied that they will overwhelm one sooner than a great stone. One locust is an inconsiderable creature, yet what greater destruction to the fields than their multitude? Great cities are deluged by great drops of rain. If we had so many little wounds or pricks in our body, so many pushes or blisters in our face, so many rents or holes in our garment as we commit venial sins, we should be half-dead, loathsome to the eye, and almost quite naked; and why do we suffer those miseries in our soul, but because we are less resentive of its harms than of what concerns our body and apparel. Oh, how dare we appear before God so replenished with confusion! But why do I insist upon the number? One sole fault is to be dreaded, because one cannot think anything little who thinks God to be infinite; nor will he account it small whose love is great. What love resides in him who makes no reckoning of displeasing God? He that displeaseth Him in a little, really displeaseth Him; he that displeaseth Him, transgresseth the laws of an ardent love.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Of exactness in small things.

God is immmensely great; in His service thou must esteem nothing little: He were not great enough unless He exceeded all littleness. If thou lovest Him, true friendship is tried in the least duties. Art shows itself in little things: the perfection of virtue is no less polite, and therefore it stands not altogether upon ample subjects. Nature is most admirable in the least things; it is most tender over the minutest creatures. Grace is no whit more dull, nor ought to be more backward. Those things which seem more minute are to be nighly regarded. Since God is so great, nothing is little which either pleaseth or displeaseth Him. In good and evil there is no minuteness. Whatsoever is good, for that very respect is great: whatsoever is bad, upon that very score is not little. An infinite goodness exacts by claim all our forces: he that owes all doth an injury if he deny anything. Use not these manners of speech: What matters this; this imports but little; this is of no moment at all. Yea, this which thou deemest nothing is a business of great concern, because what thou thinkest much or of great moment is nothing in comparison of God's greatness and thy obligation. O immense Truth, how can anything be thought little or great, if the measure of my obligation and diligence be Thy

immensity, where there is no little nor great, but an excess of all mean. How can I say this is little, if whatsoever I do for Thee is nothing.

It is not little which is held the least, since perfection consists in the least. Little things are not to be slighted because greater are contemned. If thou let a spark of fire fall into a pile of dry sticks which thou keepest under thy roof, a great flame will be raised which will consume the whole edifice. Our corrupt nature is as apt to take the infection of malice as a little dry flax to take flame. If thou slightest small things, by little and little thou wilt be perverted. Regard not the littleness which appears at first, but by the beginning measure the end. Seeds are always extremely little, and yet there is more virtue and efficacy in them than in any part of the whole plant. The parting of two highways insensibly protracted into length, ends at last in a great interval of distance, and may proceed to an infinitude, though at first less than a step would have concluded the difference. If thou once swerve from thy good purposes and remit that vigour of mind, thou wilt by degrees find thyself very remote from thy former fervour. Great things take their beginning from little ; wherefore a little is not the least if it be but the beginning. The beginning of everything is its chief and principal part: yea, it is not called a part, but the half of the whole.

Our Holy Father St, Ignatius did with reason hold that it was more dangerous to contemn little things than greater : the damage of these latter is more patent and may forthwith be remedied, but the prejudice we sustain by the former is not perceived but by length of time, when being inveterated by custom it is scarce capable of redress. The

very nature and enormity of sin makes us abhor and detest great ones; but little defects, because they seem little, for this very reason are contemned; and this being so, our mind is not bent against them. Our concupiscence is sharpened and set on edge by little things, as thinking that it may wander in them without any great danger, when it is not so venturous in great ones, it being curbed and kept in by the apprehension of a patent ensuing harm; but when our desire is once enkindled and a little trained up, how will it then lash forth, what will it not encounter? And for this reason we must sometimes proceed with more wariness and solicitude against small defects than great. Custom, which gains prescription upon vices, breeds from little things, not from great, because they are less frequent; nor shall we find it an easier task to resist custom than nature. One shall sooner have an action in law against a public invader and forcible seizure of our goods, than one that hath had them by long prescription. Those things which seem light take from us all remorse and shame of committing them, and that towards God being once cast off, what good can be expected from us?—passed shame, passed grace.

Be ashamed to refrain from great things and yield to little; for it is disgraceful and a sign of a coward to be foiled by a dwarf or weak enemy. That little is not to be slighted in which great worth may be comprised. A pearl is not contemned by reason of its littleness; nay, for this respect it is valued the more, as containing great worth in a little body. Why dost thou slight that little, wherein perchance thou mayest do God a piece of better service than in greater? Obsequiousness and diligence in small things gain greater esteem: for, as art commends

itself most when it comprehends great skill in a little compass, and we admire nature for completing in each minute creature all the requisites of life; so it is love's masterpiece to bestow its whole mind upon little things, and shut up in them an ample and inflamed affection: and such a diligence is much more praiseworthy, the want of greatness being supplied by our affection; and that is it which adds worth and only is prizeable. No true estimate of things is made but according to one's affection. The least service is great when the affection is great; but that many times is greater in little things, and therefore an exactness and compliance with our duty in them will not be less acceptable. Great things of their own nature stir up to attention, and are less troublesome, because less contingent. Small things make less impression upon the mind, nor awake it so thoroughly, and because more frequent are therefore more noisome. Wherefore, the mind that is exact in them takes them more to heart, and makes it her task to be more vigilant, more constant, and perseverant in obeying. Wherefore, he will be held no great zealot of Christ who zeals only great things. He will be esteemed no great lover of God who hath relinquished the world and himself in things of higher concernment, unless he also do it in minute. The perfection of a statuary consists not in unbarking a piece of wood or hewing it into great blocks—any rude hand can do this—but he only is a cunning artist who leaves not a superfluous chip, who carves it to a complete shape, the least bit not escaping him unaccomplished. Any novice painter can lay the first grounds or shadows of a tablet, but to bring it to perfection is the task of a skilful hand and subtile pencil; and to consummate such a piece the least limb must be elaborate. In like manner,

God's image in us is completed by the least duties of a virtuous compliance. That is no absolute picture which hath only a head, belly and feet; but in which all the parts are wrought to an exact proportion. Why wilt thou present thyself to God a rude and deformed image for want only of some petty trifle?

O infinite and most absolute Lord, what can I deem little which causeth the least similitude or dissimilitude with or from Thee? Why shall I repute little what Thou wishest me to do or avoid? Why shall I omit the least thing that may redound to Thy majesty or glory, and not accomplish all, since Thou wert pleased to embrace all without exception for my vile unworthiness and sin? O remiss spirit, if an Angel from Heaven should come and tell thee that God for His greater glory, and in thanksgiving for all the benefits conferred by Christ upon mankind, would have thee suffer the torments of St. Laurence, how ungrateful wouldst thou show thyself if perchance thou shouldst slight the favour and make but small reckoning of it. Behold what wilt thou say? God exacts not now of thee the gridiron or racks, or imprisonment, or other torments, but only that thou apply thyself to the performance of this petty action and do it not perfunctoriously. Esteem this a main business: the will of God is that thou do this, and it sufficeth. Martyrs are esteemed Saints for their patient sufferance of great torments; Confessors acquire sanctity by a patient shunning of little faults. The former tolerating great pain, eschewed the fault; the latter tolerating no faults, eschewed the much greater pains of purgatory.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

That self-praise is to be avoided.

He that loves to be praised loves an impossibility. Praise proclaims one good; but for this very reason that thou wilt be praised, thou art not only void of all good, but full of great evil, to wit, a diabolical evil, pride and ambition. Although thou hearest thyself praised, not thou shalt be praised but another. Praise is only for the good; but thou art stark naught, who covetest to be praised. He cannot be good or praiseworthy who is so vain as to hunt after commendation. Wherefore he ceaseth to be praiseworthy, who seeks to be praised; and if he be not praiseworthy he is wholly incapable of praise; for that will not be for the future, which could not be for the time precedent. If thou smilest upon thy praiser, thou dost in reality applaud thy dispraiser, because thou art most unjust, whether thou thinkest thyself just or no; for if thou holdest thyself not such, thou rejoicest at a lie; if thou holdest thyself just, this is unjust enough, that thou be preferred before others who art nothing. When thou hearest men say, thou art extremely just, extremely good, he that really is such receiveth praise, not thou who neither art just nor good, and so to thee it is rather a dispraise. The praise of the just is the dispraise of the unjust. For this very reason he is unworthy of commendation, and worthy of

contempt for grieving at his being contemned and vilified, or vainly puffed up with self-esteem. He that doth not hold himself contemptible pleads an excuse for his contemners.

Self-conceit is the daughter of a lie and mother of ignorance, confusion, shame and danger. Self-humility is the daughter of truth, and mother of merit and instruction. Whether will it be better to be confounded and deceived, or to merit and be instructed? Love only to be praiseworthy, not praised, and this sufficeth. Thou shalt only be praiseworthy by seeking solely the praise and glory of God and thy own vilification. Why hadst thou rather seem good than be so, since thou ceasest to be good by labouring to seem such and be vainly esteemed? Why lovest thou more to deceive and see others deceived, than to frame a true estimate of thyself? Why dost thou vilify thyself below a stone, thou procuring not only that it be of a sparkling brightness, but that it be not a counterfeit, insomuch that each one is ashamed to wear for an ornament a spurious gem?

O most laudable Truth, O glory of creatures, with what face durst I so much as once seek my own praise and credit, who have so often contemned Thee? With what face do I seek to be esteemed who, although I had been but once negligent in procuring Thy greater glory, deserve eternally to be vilified? How notoriously impudent, or rather frantic, would he show himself, who should covet to partake of the honour and credit he got, who dishonoured Thee by buffeting Thee, or calling Thee blasphemer, or mocking Thee with a reed in the time of Thy Passion. I am worse than all these, and am convinced to be a liar if I prefer myself before any of them. How then dare I so

much as think of self-praise and esteem? What madness and wickedness is it to seek it; nay, what impudence, O faint-hearted spirit, not to judge thyself worthy of all disgrace, nor wish to be contemned by all?

Thou shalt not therefore be really good because others style or think thee such. A sick man is not cured by being said to be cured. Which wouldst thou rather choose, to be in very deed able and strong in health although others did think thee infirm, or rather to be truly sick, and esteemed by others sound and robustious? Why dost thou choose to be held good, since thou art so very bad? Yea, it would be highly displeasing to one that is sick or in pain, even more than the malady itself, if others should say he did but counterfeit, and loved to complain without cause. Why takest thou complacence in being accounted upright when thou art quite the contrary? Sick people are so far from desiring to be thought sound, if they be not so, that they themselves are wont now and then to aggravate the disease, and love that others do so too; so one that is truly humble exaggerates his own unworthiness, and is glad when others do the same, augmenting his contumelies and disgraces; therefore the conclusion is, he that seeks to be praised, seeks not only an impossible but ridiculous thing.

Thou wilt commit a piece of injustice if thou be desirous of praise and not of disgrace, since a plurality of votes conclude thy contempt. If thou balance thyself, thy misdemeanours and innumerable defects will preponderate thy good deeds, they being very few and depending upon others. Wilt thou know in plain terms that it is impossible for thee to deserve praise? It is impossible for thee to have

anything of thyself for which to be esteemed. And thence thou mayest gather man's insufficiency, from his labouring to gain credit by what is another's, which if he had it of his own, he would never glory in another man's right: as worldly men are wont to do for having brave horses, faithful servants, or rich apparel; generosity being only the quality of the horse, and a generous horse may have a vicious or base-minded owner. Fidelity is the glory of a servant, and a good servant may have a very naughty master. Splendid apparel is a commendation rather due to the tailor or weaver, and a fine coat may cover a foul body and ulcerous conscience. By the same vicious manner of proceeding men appropriate to themselves what is only proper to God, even those who have abandoned the world, while they do not wholly abandon themselves.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Of the baseness of man.

If thou desirest peace with God, humble thyself beneath all men and all things. It is a terrible saying, "God resists the proud;" neither is that less terrible, "the proud resist God." God resists the proud, that they may not commit wickedness: the proud resist God, that He may not do good. God resists the proud, that they become not evil and wholly bad by their pride, for which end He seeks to humble them: the proud resist God, that He be not good and beneficial, by stopping the current of the Divine blessings. Make hence an evident conjecture that thou art extremely base, that is extremely proud, since thou resistest God; otherwise He would have enriched thee with innumerable benefits, graces, and virtues. It is palpable that a cloud hangs over thee which keeps off the sun, if at mid-day in an open champaign his beams do not forcibly beat upon thee; thou wilt then be all in the shade, although thou seest nothing that can overshadow thee. None is more vile and defectuous than he who acknowledgeth in himself no vileness or defect, because his mind raised above itself stands in opposition with God and His clarity. There is no more evident sign of our pride than the surcease of the Divine beneficence, because it puts a stop to God's ardent desire of communicating

Himself; it impedes the efficacy of Christ's Passion, the intercession of the Virgin, and the prayers of the Saints. Great is my malice, and bottomless my misery, since I, being but one, can resist so many, obstructing as much as in me lies the five fountains of Christ's Blood, and the torrent of the Divine liberality. Although we were so mad as not to acknowledge any sin or defect in ourselves, we ought to take this for a most pregnant token of extreme pride and baseness; nor, were our sins insufficient, ought anything else to keep us more in humility; not the worms in which we are to end; not the clay of which we are moulded; not the ordures with which while we live we are stuffed; not the miseries of our body which insult so over us; nor the ignorance of our mind which thwarts and frustrates our counsels. It is more than enough to humble us beneath all things to see God communicate Himself no more to us, and permit, as He doth, our defects.

O humble Majesty of God! how dear and desirable is our humility to Thee! Christ died for our sins; but He permits them for our humiliation. Did the humility of man cost dearer than the life of God? Did Jesus prize our humility more than the benefit of His Redemption, since He carries Himself permissively towards our sins, for the cancelling whereof He spent both His Blood and His life, and humbled Himself by descending from Heaven, that He might give redress to our pride; and He that redeemed sin by His own humiliation and death, makes sins themselves as it were the purchase of our humility? What is this which seems almost incredible, that God should do incredible things to make us humble? it seeming otherwise inconceptible that ever we should conceive thoughts

of pride, for it is impossible to find what may source them.

We are nothing and we have nothing. Nay, though we were some great matter, considering nevertheless how we have behaved ourselves, I see not how we can with confidence lift our eyes up to Heaven. We are in all respects most vile both for what we are and for what we are not; both for what we have done and for what we have omitted; both for what God hath done for us and what He hath not done in us. And because He is so great, and we such a nothing, who is there that considering the sins which he hath committed, will not debase himself to the centre of humility? and yet he must no less do it for the trespasses he hath not committed. For there is no share of this ours, and least of all is it to be attributed to us that we did not trespass; and for as much as concerned us we had trespassed. Upon this account thou art as much obliged to God, with Whose grace thou didst not cooperate, and hast equal cause to humble thyself as if thou hadst trespassed. Things are not to be prized according to their actuality, but their intrinsical virtue. A sword is not sold dearer for having slain many, but because it could and is fit for such a piece of service. Thy malice was sufficient for so many trespasses; that it did not actually complete them, is not to be ascribed to thee, but God. Others' offences ought also in good reason to humble thee as much as thy own; for although that thou didst thus offend be not a thing above thy reach, yet that thou didst not share in others' transgressions, is a peculiar favour from God above nature, and thou art peculiarly indebted to Him upon this account; because it is more remarkable that He preserved thee from them,

than if He had pardoned them being committed. Wherefore if thou be not guilty of punishment, at least thou art of greater gratitude and humiliation. What sins soever thou hearest committed by others, deem thyself forthwith guilty of them. The Virgin Mother had greater motives of humbling herself for being preserved from sin, than Magdalene who had so many and such enormous ones forgiven her; yea, although she were dispossessed of seven devils. Our wretchedness also in the omission of many good deeds must in like manner humble us as well as those which we performed; for the first are totally ours, the second God's alone. No man can justly boast of what belongs wholly to another, but ought to be confounded at his own ingratitude, and double his diligence for the obligation. We, moreover, mar many good actions, and do them after a superficial and imperfect manner, besides that they both are very inconsiderable and few.

But who is there that proposing to himself what Thou, O humble Jesus, didst for our sakes, dare glory in his own good deeds? Compare, O ungrateful spirit, thy goodly and ridiculous action for which thou art so vainly puffed up, with the infinite work of the Incarnation, of the Eucharist, and Passion. Wilt thou be able to show thy face and not blush for shame? God, Who is all fulness, evacuated Himself for thee; and thou, who art nothing, holdest thyself somebody in opposition to Him, though all thou dost for so loving and zealous a Lord be far from either fervour or zeal. If any one would bethink himself what God hath forborne to do on his behalf, would he not humble himself for His not precipitating him into hell after his first sin, as He did the delinquent Angels?

O man, the bane and infamy of creatures, what

hast thou of thyself that is honourable, or why layest thou claim to anything, and makest not forthwith an oblation of all to God, to Whom thou art indebted for so many benefits? If we had store of things which were really our own, it were our duty to offer and give them all to Him, for what He hath been pleased to bestow upon us. How then are we so senseless, ungrateful, and unjust, as to appropriate to ourselves what is absolutely His, which, if we could truly own as ours, it would be an insufferable impudence not to make them His? What wonder if thou givest some petty toys to God, since He gave all things and Himself to thee. I wish thou hadst much to offer Him; but since thou hast not, rejoice so much the more, and glory in thy poverty, beholding all to be His already; which, if they were thine, thou wouldest make His. Rejoice that thy desire is His nature.

It is a thing of greater confusion that sometimes we glory in our misdeeds as if they were good, and present God with our corrupt actions, as if we intended thereby to oblige Him. What greater frenzy imaginable than to think thou canst oblige Him Whom thou canst not pay, and to do it by those things which render thee more obnoxious to punishment? But if any of thy good works were entire and perfect, it hath not that completeness from thee, and therefore thou oughtest not to style it thine: and how canst thou oblige thy Lord and satisfy thy Creditor with what is not thy own but another's? Nay, if the good work were totally ours, and God had no hand nor share in it, why dost thou boast of it, and think therewith to make Him full satisfaction, since what measure thou affordest others, the self-same shall be afforded thee? If this proceeding be held with men, why not with

Almighty God? Thou measurest His gifts with a very short ell. Hast thou such a mean conceit of what He hath done for thee, that thou thinkest to recompense it with such a slender piece of service? We must measure God with a large ell, and deem Him so great, that all we do falls hugely short of His Humility and Passion, to say nothing of His Majesty and Beneficence.

He that is not meanly conceited of his own actions, both for number and worth, is injurious to God, esteeming Him only worthy of small services. Make God the pattern of thy humility, Who, after so many benefits heaped upon thee, thinks He hath done nothing; behaving Himself so towards thee and rewarding thy merits, which without Him had been none, as if He had contributed nothing to them. Why then wilt thou ascribe thy services and good works to thyself, as if they proceeded wholly from thee, and God had no hand in them, when nevertheless all is chiefly depending on Him? Why dost thou vaunt thyself better than others, since thou shouldst rather be contristated that they have less goodness than they ought, and must reckon their want thy loss? Neither is the charity nor clarity of God conspicuous in thee, if thou fixest thy eyes rather upon thy own perfections than thy nothing. Stars, when they are in a remote distance from the sun and partake not so fully of his light, one seems to exceed another, and this is when they shine clearly. But all this proceeds from the darksomeness of the night; for in the day-time, though they more approach the sun as being in the same hemisphere with him, and one then exceed another and share more copiously of his light, yet we cannot see which shines brighter; yea, none of them all is exposed to our view; they are then as if there were

no star in the firmament, but all a mere though pretty vacuity. He wanders as yet among his own imperfections and cannot be called an illuminated soul, on whom Heaven derives its light but sparingly. He that in the night of self-love and self-seeking dares think himself somebody, and much better than his neighbours; but Saints, which adhere to God, though they be loaden and charged with merits, prefer themselves before none, but esteem themselves a mere nothing, fulfilling with their Jesus all justice, that is all humility. The just man is humble, because he will not admit nor have anything that is another's fathered upon himself. He that esteems himself nothing how can he wrong his conscience, by being unjust either to his neighbour, as thinking himself better than him, or against God, as being highly conceited of his own goodness; for nobody is good but God alone; and if none good, certainly none better. Thou hast no reason at all to prefer thyself before others whom thou beholdest poor, humble, ignoble, for any goods of fortune; but shouldst rather have them in great veneration for the resemblance of Christ which shines in them. Jesus was poor, humble, accursed of the Jews, obscure: He subjected Himself to all power and princes though never so wicked. What Christ made choice of and esteemed, do not thou contemn and vilify.

CHAPTER XXXV.

What things ought to humble man: and that he can have nothing besides God alone.

Two things there are which ought to make thee humble, thy own baseness and the baseness of creatures and honours. Although thou thyself wert great, yet thou shouldst contemn all worldly dignities as little, vile, and unworthy of thee; and though they were great, thou oughtest to reject them, because thou art base and unworthy of them. Thou art nothing but forgery and sin: deceive not thyself, nor seek to excuse thee; thy iniquities will proclaim thee such. Being so overcharged with sin, why dost thou extol thyself for some one work but apparently good? An eagle could not soar on high if she had but one only feather. The peacock though beautiful in his displayed train, is soon quailed for the sole deformity of his feet. Thou being full of defects, how darest thou wax proud for some one feigned virtue? Remember that even from thy very cradle thou art infamous for original sin. As one that is branded with ignominy appears in an assembly of noblemen, so must thou stand in the presence of the unspotted Angels. Thy sins have made thee a parricide of the Son of God and thy own brother Jesus. The wicked Cain was quite out of countenance, and doth thine become more brazen? Account thyself always his equal, and

behold not thy most loving Father but with the eyes of fear and shame.

Thou who hast contemned the Word of God and His Son, why standest thou so much upon the words of men? What makes thee so presumptuous, since hitherto thou hast done little or nothing, who when thou hast done all, wilt still be but an unprofitable servant? Yea, this title is too great and much above thy desert, since thou hast nothing wherewith to serve God, all being His already, and He rather serving us. Thou art so wretched and needy, that thou neither hast anything nor canst have: which, if thou understandest aright, thou wilt at first be much contristated, seeing more clearly than the sun thy own poverty, and despairing to be able to have anything of thy own; but thou wilt soon be replenished with unspeakable joy, beholding the riches of God, and how He possesseth all. I rejoice, O Lord, that it is impossible for me to have anything, because it is impossible for Thee not to have all. Why am I sorry that nothing is mine, if it be in my power to make God mine? What an ineffable joy is it that I can have nothing, no, not so much as myself, besides God alone! a pregnant sign whereof is, for that it is not lawful for me to have anything in fruition besides Him alone. I must only use the rest of creatures and myself as another's, not enjoy them. He is not master of a thing to whom the use of it is granted only for a time; that is rather said to be possessed which one may enjoy for all eternity. He that hath only the use of the world shall have the issues and profits of the Lord of the world.

I congratulate with myself, O Lord, that I have nothing to offer in oblation to Thy sacred Majesty: for what worth can accrue to things for being mine,

to make them appear in Thy sight? But because I have of Thine wherewith to offer, it will have worth for being Thine, and on that account be acceptable. How can I have anything of myself who am nothing? Yea, for this very reason that thou esteemest thyself something, O proud spirit, thou must repute thyself more vile and abject. While a sick man keeps his bed he perceives not so well his own imbecility; but when he is upon recovery and sits up, then he feels his own weakness, not being able to stand by himself. The more thou appliest to the service of God and advancest in the way of virtue, the more humble and circumspect must thou be, and then thou wilt discover thy own baseness. While a sick man keeps his bed he needs not fear falling; but when he rises and begins to walk about, then conscious of his own infirmity, he trusts not to himself, but mistrusting a fall leans upon another.

Why then dost thou so magnify thyself, since for this very respect that thou dost so, thou art more debased? Thou art in a manner more ridiculous than Lucifer himself, since thou magnifiest thyself upon far less grounds. What is thy nature compared with that of the Cherubim? What is thy sanctity in comparison of the sanctity of that grace wherewith the first Angel was enriched by God? What wouldst thou seem to be and appear to others? Thou canst have nothing of thy own, and that which thou canst least of all have is honour. All glory is only due to God, Who, though He impart other things to men, yet it He will not. If thou dost well it is sufficient that He knows it; that He see and approve it Who is to reward it, and Whom thou intendest to please. Certainly if thou didst love God fervently, and wert a faithful

servant, thou wouldst wish, if it were not altogether impossible, to do something for His sake which He were not to remunerate nor to come to the knowledge of, making it thy sole aim to be loyal to Him, never regarding the reward at all. Among faithful friends one is careful of another and does him good offices, though he be wholly ignorant of them; yea, many times he conceals them from him, for he aims at no other salary besides fidelity and obsequiousness towards his friend. So he that loves God sincerely, desires no recompense more than to serve Him and comply with His trust. Let me, O Lord, imitate Thy fidelity towards me who am so perfidious; Who dost me so many good offices; Who heapest so many benefits upon me, wholly ignorant of them, though Thou knowest that I am always ungrateful. When men commit acts of wickedness they desire not to have Thee an eye-witness: I, O Lord, will recant from this and change my manner of proceeding. Wherefore as often as I trespass, which will be very often, I covet Thee a spectator, to the end Thou mayest chastise me, and assist me that I fall not into a relapse: but when by Thy assistance I do good, I had rather Thou didst not see me at all, than that men did. If the fervent lover of God do not good for the testimony of God, how deceitfully will he love who seeks the approbation of men.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

How much we owe to the grace of God and Christ.

It will be an act of pride in thee to esteem thyself dust and ashes, since thou art nothing but imposture and sin. Thou hast nothing good, why dost thou stand in opposition with God? Thou art replenished with evils, why dost thou not blush even before men? Thou art capable of having all evil, why art thou not in perpetual fear? Thou art capable of doing all evil, why dost thou not dread thy own condition? Thy own very essence is not thine, but God's. Yea, what thou hadst before thy being was none of thine neither. Thou hadst then a mere nothing which had a possibility of being, and even that thou hadst not of thyself, but from God; Who if He were not, thou couldst not be. Why reputest thou thyself great, since the very nothing which thou hadst before thy creation was not of thyself? Therefore thou owest more than thyself to God; for this also is a part of thy debt, that when thou wast nothing He gave thee a possibility of being.

Thou receivedst the benefit of creation: tell me, what member was moulded by thy designment; or to what joint of any one finger didst apply clay, or afford materials whereof to frame it; or by what prayer didst thou obtain of God to be created and

called out from among infinite natures and better individuals which sleep in the dust of their own nothing? What diligence of thine prevented that thou wert not born blind, lame, frantic, or some savage barbarian? Dost thou glory in thy talents of wit, handsomeness of body, nobleness of birth? Yes, thou mayest lawfully do so, if God at thy suggestion made thee such. But thou wilt say, I glory not in being created, but in being created such a one, so industrious, so witty, and so toward of behaviour. Tell me, I pray, if thou didst not advise God in the point of thy creation, couldst thou advise Him to create thee so witty, and after such and such a manner? If thou didst not suggest to Him to endow thee with such a mind, why dost thou boast of its piercing subtility? Didst thou make choice of that mind, and cunningly sift into that bottomless abyss of things possible, extracting thence the best qualified? I do not (wilt thou reply) brag of my natural endowments, but of the virtuous practices I embrace while others slight them; I glory that I am better than they, an upright man, and one that fully complies with my duty. Nay, be ashamed that scarce once thou compliest with it, and hast been neglective a thousand times. O unjust and partial sharer! thou allottest to God the worst share; to Him thou attributest thy being, and claimest to thyself thy being good. It is more to be good than only to be. Why dost thou play the usurper in the better half, since thou canst challenge no interest, not even in the worst? There is a larger distance betwixt being good and being a man, than there is betwixt a man and being nothing. God could make thee a man out of nothing, only by commanding, by acting, by living; but of a man to make thee good, He was to serve, to suffer, to die. Thou art

a most unjust distributer, who ascribest nature to God, and grace to thyself.

I never saw any body proud for his existency, but almost all are for their being good and better; and yet the former arrogance is more excusable: for thou hadst had more (supposing thou hadst anything) in having a being when thou wast not, than after it in being good and just; for we only not contributed to our creation, but we moreover put a let and obstacle to our justification. O most patient Truth of God! how canst Thou tolerate our lying arrogance, were it not for its ridiculousness, while we make ourselves the authors of what we most oppose and seek by all means to destroy? If we carry ourselves so modestly towards those things which are left in their nothing as not to vaunt over them for our being, why are we so impudently vainglorious against God for our being good, and against men for our being better than they? Why takest thou pride, O my soul, in that which ought to put thee most to confusion? For thy being nothing thou hast no reason to be confounded, it is enough thou be not proud; for that hath nothing of ignominy in it: but thy being an impediment to God by thy sins, that affords matter enough to plunge thee in a deep sea of shame and confusion.

The self-same that gave thee a being will give thee a good being. As thou hadst nothing of thyself towards thy existence; so being created, thou hadst nothing towards thy being good. If thou hast nothing of thyself and in thyself towards nature, so neither hadst thou towards grace. Yea, although thou didst nothing to deserve a being, thou didst no evil to deserve a not being; but to be good, thou didst contribute nothing of thy own; and not to be good, thou didst contribute much evil.

Although human nature had still remained in that integrity and dignity in which it was created, it would not preserve itself by itself, but by God; wherefore if it could not of itself preserve the grace which it received, how can it repair what it lost, and glory in that reparation. Remember the infamy and corruption of our nature after its fall by sin. If, when it stood entire and in a flourishing condition, it could do nothing of itself, being now weakened and rendered contemptible what will it be able to do? A pot glories not in the presence of the potter of its form and usefulness, though well it may of its matter, in which he had no hand. Thou hast nothing at all before God whereof to glory, thou being moreover made of nothing; why then dost thou glory of thy form and usefulness, who mayest well be confounded at thy misusage; and canst not glory in thy matter, because thou proceedest from nothing. Thou hast no source which can derive any goodness into thee, because of nothing nothing is made as by way of causality. If thou be nothing of thyself, thou canst do nothing nor operate anything of thyself, how much less anything that is good? If what is nothing of itself have or can do nothing of itself, then it is only powerful to sin, which is a defect and nothing—yea, less and more contemptible than nothing. The eye, of itself, hath capacity to darkness, and to exclude sight or not to see; but in order to actual vision it can do nothing without the assistance and concurrence of light.

That which is above nature and above thyself to wit, an abnegation of nature and thyself, thou canst not have immediately of thyself and nature, but from God, Who is above both thee and nature. If thou believest not reason in this point, believe

faith. Thou art nothing but imposture and sin: of thyself is only perdition. We are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, but all our sufficiency is from God. If we cannot so much as have a congruous thought, how shall we be able to perform meritorious actions? It may be borne with that thou wouldst seem foolish, but I cannot be persuaded that thou wouldst be held a heretic. Why, I pray, dost thou despise the world, and conceive a love of things eternal? Because thou hast experienced the inconstancy of temporal things, and beheld unexpected calamities, as the death of wealthy and powerful men, and the like. Was it thou or God, who combined things into such a series? Didst thou forecast the death of that king or potentate, which moved thee so feelingly by beholding the instability of human things? Besides, these self-same things passed in public and were known to others; why were not they as well as thou stirred up to a contempt of the world? Why when one is reclaimed doth another still persist in his wicked courses? Thou must needs acknowledge some supernatural cause of this difference which neither is in us nor of us alone. Perchance thou gloriest for thy being moved and not others, as if it proceeded wholly from thyself. Tell me, I beseech thee, how often have such like casualties, nay, more forcible than this, happened, and yet thou feltest no such motion? Therefore that now it is effectual to thy conversion, proceeds not from thyself but from some hidden and provident virtue, from His love and solicitude over thee, Who would not have thee detained any longer in an error, but excited thee sweetly to an acknowledgment of the truth, and ordered things so, as He knew they would move thee efficaciously. Thy wilt reply, that

therefore now and not before thou art moved, because some hurtful friend of thine was absent or dead, by whose company thou wert drawn to thy inveterate and sinful proceedings, or because a fit opportunity of committing them was not presented. Wilt thou perchance acquiesce in this? Was the death or absence of thy wicked consort, or this opportunity, in thy own hand; or was it not rather God Who disposed things so, and moreover furnished thee with virtuous company, that thou mightest be incited by its imitation?

In like manner what good soever thou hast or dost, or what evil soever thou wantest and shunnest, it is because God disposing things for thy good removed all obstacles, and seasonably gave thee incitements to goodness, and moreover infused supernatural habits and helps to very many things which exceeded altogether the reach of nature. What share hast thou in these? If thou findest none, what insolency is it to ascribe all to thyself? Either thou must acknowledge the grace of God and thy own nothing, or together with Epicurus confine God, and remove Him from the government of the world, leaving Him no part of providence. O most wise Truth, take compassion upon me most senseless, who am like to dote much more than that philosopher, who never was so fond as to say that his own providence managed and ordered things; for so he would make himself better than God. But he that presumes upon his own force in a meritorious action, besides that he takes away all providence from God, he necessarily usurps it to himself; because if there were another concurrence of things, he would not exercise a good act, but a vicious. And although things were contingent by mere chance or carried with an inevitable destiny,

yet he had no reason in the world to attribute anything to himself.

He that applauds himself only in the goods of nature, denies that he is created by God; but he that glories in his talents of virtue, denies that the whole world and all the creatures in it are made by Him, and disposed and ordained for our good. In the first, he deprives God of the dominion of one only nature, to wit, His own; in the latter, he deprives Him of the dominion of the whole universe: in the first, he robs Him of His omnipotency; in the latter, of His wisdom also and goodness, denying that His Fatherly Providence had with due forecast ordered things so for our advancement towards salvation. What shall I say of them that glory in those virtues which are above all nature, and being ranked in the highest class carry a kind of proportion with God, and either make us as it were gods in a Divine degree, or at least suppose us such by a sublime participation of the Deity itself; as also in those which have God for their immediate object, faith, hope, and charity, in which whosoever glories, he must necessarily either deny God to be above nature, or think himself of himself equal or better than God.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

That man must not only esteem himself nothing, but also a great sinner.

Thou art far short of being truly humble if thou thinkest only that of thyself thou hast no good; thou must also hold thyself very bad. St. Paul styled himself the first of sinners, and that mouth of the Holy Ghost could not tell a lie. Wilt thou perchance hold thyself better than such an Apostle, or think thou speakest very modestly or with exaggeration, if thou call thyself the ringleader of the wicked? Esteem thyself in good earnest the first among sinners and the last among creatures, because thou must prefer thyself before none at all. Nobody ever had meaner persuasives than thou to incline God's mercy towards thee. Do not esteem it an act of modesty to think thus, for Divine faith teacheth that no good at all preceded. Thou hast no ground nor reason to think that any other who had experienced the like mercy and favours from God that thou hast done, would have been less grateful than thou art; neither is it lawful to judge so rashly of another, who shouldst hold it almost impossible, that greater ingratitude can be found anywhere than thou evidently acknowledgest in thyself. If thou wert truly compunct for thy sins, thou wouldst be seriously of this opinion. He that is tormented with an intense and stinging pain

thinks no other so great as it, and that nobody else suffers such anguish; the affection, to wit, inclines and oversways the judgment. If thou didst bear any love to humility, thou wouldst easily judge thyself the worst of all others. The proud man, out of a desire of being exalted, prefers himself before all; as also because he regards not so much in others their perfections as defects. Thou, if thou wert truly humble, wouldst account thyself the worst of all; thou wouldst consider thy own imperfections, not another's, fixing thy eye wholly and solely upon their virtues.

O Majesty of the Supreme Truth, what needs any interpretation? I confess before Thy Angels, before men, and malign spirits, without any tergiversation, that I am the unworthiest of all creatures. The moral dignity of a rational creature which grounds his chief praise, worth and virtue, consists in the knowledge and advertence of his obligation, and his proceeding according to it: these in nobody are obnoxious to greater abuses than in me. Although many virtuous men have been more illuminated, and some to the outward appearance have for number outgone my sins, but this juncture, to have sinned more grievously and less cooperated with my obligations in such knowledge of them, such remorse of conscience, such inspirations from Heaven, all these concur in nobody besides myself. If any one perchance have committed more sins than I, he hath received fewer inspirations, and had less obligation. If any be found more called upon and favoured by God, he sinned less and corresponded more faithfully; but, if perchance, which I can scarce believe, some one may be found who sinned more heavily, and had a profounder knowledge of his duty, I do not for all this deem him worse than me, be-

cause such a one will not know nor resent greater obligations than I do. And although another had in very deed greater ties, though I think it cannot be; yet acts of virtue are to be weighed by the conscience they proceed from; and since I am persuaded that my obligations to serve Him are greater than all others, and yet serve Him less, I may well be held the vilest and ungratefulest of all. Although the sins of Antichrist exceed mine in number, yet his knowledge, light and obligation will not exceed mine; for he shall not obtain pardon of his trespasses so often as I have done, nor will he be urged with such efficacious and present benefits and inspirations, nor preserved from so many occasions of offending. Although Lucifer had greater light communicated to him, yet he was damned but for one only sin, nor had he so many ties upon him as I. The Son of God became not Man for his sake, nor shed His precious Blood. Judas also had fewer obligations from Christ than press me; for as yet He had not died. O humble and meek Immensity of God, how canst thou tolerate me, for not being confounded and swallowed up in the gulf of my own baseness! Let me not, I beseech Thee, prefer myself before any one, since I find no ground to suspect anybody worse than myself.

Acts which render one sinner greater than another are but of a limited number. How then am not I worse than any of them, who can without any stint add sin to sin, and have poison enough in me to infect the whole world? For after so many benefits received, after such an excess of God's love, so many Divine inspirations, I am still extremely wicked: and what if He by His grace in me and others had not curbed the unbridledness of my malice? I am daily by the addition of new sins more and more disposed

to deprave both myself and others more perniciously. If one sin of Adam was able to infect his whole innocent posterity, if one theft of Achan could render all Israel liable to Divine vengeance, such an infinite number as mine are, what must they needs effect? I see not, O infirm spirit, how thou canst choose but be confounded, considering thy own despicable meanness together with the vast multitude of thy offences, if thou confrontest these with God's Immensity, with the excess of His benefits, the incomprehensible work of Christ's Redemption, with His ineffable love and loyalty towards thee; in comparison of which last, all the stupendous things He hath done for thee are little regardable, and by which alone He was as it were forced to do what He did. But all this is nothing, and much short of truth, whatsoever can be conceived concerning thy baseness and infamy; yea, esteem it nothing; for thou wouldst still find thyself more and more contemptible if thou wert but thoroughly enlightened by God. O most precious Truth, if the case stand thus with me, why do not I despise myself, disdain myself, abhor myself so far as not to know what either to do or think of myself? I wonder that I endeavour not to reverence God more profoundly; I am amazed that I seek not my own contempt more fervently!

One sole crime renders him that commits it infamous, even among sinful men, who cannot penetrate the malice of sin, nor conceive a worthy detestation of it. How then must so many defaults of mine, so many culpable neglects, disgrace and deform me before the sanctity of God, His pure Angels, and glorious Saints. For although I may well hope that many sins through the mercy of God are forgiven me, what I was once of myself I am

always, nor shall ever of myself be more. If I had once of myself what I might account myself contemptible for, why not always? For of myself I never have more good: rather shame must increase in me; and how much the more I have received, so much ought I to humble myself for my sins past. Since I have learned by experience the Divine mercy, shame ought, I say, to increase for having contemned so good a Lord, and still persisting in my ingratitude. O most vile and wretched spirit, why in so great ingratitude dost thou not deem thyself unworthy of all grace? How darest thou be so bold as to beg any? Why, if it were voluntarily given thee without thy demanding it, dost thou not tremble so far as almost to doubt, whether it were not better to want that gift of God than be exposed again to a hazard of abusing what thou hast so often contemned? But hoping in thy mercy, O Lord, I will be bold and forward; yea, importune to the whole Court of Heaven, discovering to it my baseness and ulcers. Neither will I cease to cry to all and each Saint in particular, till I be even troublesome to them, and at least by my importunity, since I have no better title of myself, I will obtain greater grace and mercy of my Jesus, that He desert not me for deserting it.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

What it is to style oneself nothing and a great sinner.

Thou wilt abuse others by terming thyself nothing and a great sinner, if thou really thinkest not so; but thou wilt deceive thyself if thou thinkest not so, and proceedest not accordingly, treating and demeaning thyself as such. What, thinkest thou, is it to be a nothing? To be no more solicitous over thyself, that thou mayest seek God's greater glory, than thou art over those things which are not touched at all nor moved, for wholly relinquishing and evacuating themselves. Wouldst thou fret at him that should beat the air, or chafe at another who, being placed in those vacuities of the imaginary spaces, should spend his tongue and fists in chiding and striking that empty nothing? So thou, if thou esteemest thyself nothing, and hast evacuated thyself of thyself, thou must not, as much as may be, resent any injuries; otherwise by so doing thou wilt esteem thyself something. It will be as ridiculous and childish for thee, who termest thyself nothing, to seek thy own repute and interest, as if thou shouldst be extremely anxious how to wish honour and prosperity enough to one that is not as yet created, nor ever shall be. Wherefore thou must be no otherwise affected towards thee and thine, than if thou hadst not as yet a being.

But by truly and seriously holding thyself nothing, thou dost wonderfully purify thyself, and puttest thy soul in a fit disposition to receive, without stop or let, the gifts of God and God Himself. Nature cannot endure a vacuity, nor can God suffer the humble man to remain evacuated, but He must forthwith replenish him. That God might become Man He evacuated Himself; and that man may become God, one spirit with God, must not he do so too? It will be an evacuation of thyself, to esteem and regard what concerns thee no otherwise than if thou wert a mere nothing, to let no thought which savours of thyself or earthliness be predominant, to divest thyself of all evil habits and affections, despoiling thyself of thyself, as much as if thou wert but newly created of nothing. God evacuated Himself for thee, demeaning Himself as if He had not been God, and procuring thy salvation in such sort as if thou alone wert to be saved: thou must take Divine things, as much as lies in thee, so to heart, as if thou wert God Himself. Thou must evacuate thyself in the highest degree, and recede from thyself almost to an infinite distance, more than if thou wert not at all; which thou wilt compass if thou becomest quite another creature by grace and love, passing from thyself to God, Who is infinitely remote from nothing, and all essence. There are two glorious prerogatives of the Divine will, love and power; but love seems in some sort more powerful than that very power, which can, it is true, reduce thee to nothing, but cannot promiscuously make thee another thing, nor the nature of a man the nature of an Angel; in which case thou wouldst be more distant from thyself than if thou didst become nothing. But he that is beloved by God and reciprocally loves Him, that fire eating off the dross

of all self-affection, and humbling and annihilating his will, he becomes in a manner a god, breathing nothing but the Divine will and pleasure: for although he remain still in his own essence, yet he remains not in self-affection, but is conform to God's appointment, as far distant from himself as if he were another thing. One man feels not the smart of another's wounds, nor resents the affronts that are put upon others: in like manner, for God's glory, thou must not, as much as is possible, be resentive at all of thy contempt, no more than if it concerned not thee but another.

Again, if thou reputest thyself a great sinner, thou must consequently persuade thyself that all the crosses and calamities, which befall even others, are caused by thy defaults and negligences. What affliction soever God inflicts is for a punishment and redress of sin, and in the course of this life He many times chastiseth the sins of one upon another. Therefore, since I am the greatest of sinners, they are my offences which occasion all miseries; since they are the effects of sin, why of others, and not of the one that is the most heinous? Wars, plague, famine, are penalties and remedies of my delinquencies; they are all to me both favours and punishments. In my behalf the Divine mercy and justice are everywhere engaged; justice and peace give a mutual kiss, mercy and truth embrace each other, that everywhere and in all I may, O Lord, fear Thee and love Thee, be confounded in my maliciousness, and hope in Thy goodness. I wonder not at all that the world is plagued with so many calamities, since it harbours me. I, like another Jonas, am the occasion of this shipwreck and that tempest which involves many. For one sin of Achan the innocent people of God was pitifully

scourged. I am a greater delinquent than he. Why may not I presume that many innocent people are for my sake afflicted with general calamities? I, O Israel, am an anathematized person in the midst of thee; I alone suffice to profane the whole world. I am so impudent that though I share the deepest in sin, I make the least satisfaction for myself and others whom I behold groaning under such miseries, believing myself to be the occasion. I have wronged all men by my sins; I am a debtor to all, and guilty of all their punishments and humiliations.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

That God's glory is always to be sought.

Thou must acknowledge great obligations to God's glory; and it is but meet that thou be grateful and a fervent zealot of its advancement. We are indebted to God's glory for our essence, for our redemption, beatitude and all the good we have. God wrought all for His own glory; and He was so beneficial to us for its sake, it is but reason that we consecrate all our endeavours solely to it. O God of majesty, Thou seekest our honour upon all occasions; is it not meet that man endeavour Thine in all he can? Thou didst honour man in his creation, making him Thy own task above other creatures, and moulding him with Thy own hands. Nor didst Thou content Thyself in creating him as Thou didst the heavens and other creatures by a word of command, but Thou wouldst as it were labour in it, being obsequious to him even before his being. Thou didst honour man in the provision

Thou madest for him, preparing him the magnificent palace of this world, and subjecting all creatures to his beck, that he might use them as so many servants. Thou didst honour man in his conservation, allotting him an Angel Guardian, a most noble creature, who sees Thee face to face, and stands in a perpetual fruition of Thy beatitude; and this Thou didst to honour us in all respects, deputing for our custody one adorned not only with the endowments of nature and grace, but also of glory. Thou didst honour man in his redemption, elevating human nature to the fellowship of Thy throne and Majesty. Thou didst honour man in his remuneration, affording him for his light and momentary afflictions no less salary than Thy own Kingdom, and preferment into Thy family. Thou hast through all a studious regard to man's greater glory.

Let it confound thee, O ungrateful spirit, that thou seekest not the greater glory of thy God. Procure His glory by thy own contempt: He will be so much the more exalted in thee, by how much the more thou art depressed. God and man stand proportioned as doth a continued and severed quantity. A number may be augmented without end. A stick may be lessened to an infinitude. The more a stick is diminished by an ablation of its parts, the more the number is still enhanced: the meaner conceit thou hast of thyself the sublimer will be thy knowledge of God. Thy knowledge of God may be augmented without end. Self-contempt and the knowledge of thy unworthiness may increase to an infinity, because thou art infinitely despicable. Employ thyself in pondering thy own ignominy, and how thou art nothing but dust and ashes; so shalt thou behold the glory of God, which was the end of thy creation. Thou wilt spend thy time

much less profitably in other subtilties which rather hinder than further the knowledge of God. It is certainly known by a wonderful experiment that a vessel filled and stuffed with ashes will hold as much water as if it contained nothing at all, which notwithstanding, being taken up with other materials, is so much less capable of that liquor for whose reception it was made. Knowledge of thyself doth not hinder thy knowledge of God; these two stand very well together: the one drinks in the other as ashes do water. The beholding of thy own ignominy will make thee seek the glory of God, for which thou wast created, and hinder thee from entrenching upon it. A tree at one and the same time spreads its root downward and its branches upward: so much it aspires in height as it gains ground in depth. Thy mind will be elevated if thou keepest it under. Wilt thou plainly know that praise and glory are not thy goods, nor any of thy appurtenances? Consider that praise adds nothing intrinsical to thee, nor superadds any perfection, although thou be a beggar and imperfect: thou standest more in need of a redress which will rather better thee than only term thee such, thou still remaining wretched and needy, Praise then and glory are properly only found in him, who is in no kind of indigency; for that very respect that praise avails him nothing to whom it is exhibited, we conjecture that it ought to be bestowed on him only who knows not what it is to want. Give glory to him to whom nothing is profitable, and that will be most profitable to thee. God seeks thy advantage in all, not His own; do thou desire all glory to God, none to thyself. As no creature is profitable to God, so no self-honour is appetible to thee. Let all the glory of thy actions be entirely referred

to God, as all the profit of His works redounds to thee. The glory of God and benefit of man are sisters, and mutually embrace each other. God orders nothing to the amplification of His own glory, which makes not also for the benefit of man. God is not inconsiderate, to put His hand to work He knows not why: He is not vain, to work unprofitably without any advantage; He is infinitely perfect, immensely good. By reason of His perfection He is indigent of nothing, and therefore it remains only that the end of His working be His own glory and praise, to be exhibited by creatures, which is a thing altogether extrinsical. By reason of His goodness all He doth is beneficial, but because He Himself wants nothing, all the benefit redounds to creatures. As He can do nothing prejudicial to His own honour, so neither doth He to thy profit. Thou being a man all compounded of imperfections and wickedness, thou must in nothing at all aim at thy own credit. One must first be perfect in himself before he deserve praise from another. Exterior glory is consequent to interior goodness accomplished in itself; but by doing all to God's honour, thou shalt do all also to thy own advantage.

That only is advantageous to man which is glorious to God. If thou wilt seek thy own profit, seek not what is profitable to thee, but what is honourable to God. Yea, if thou wilt not be unprofitable both to the world and in the world, make God's glory thy whole task and employment, that being the end of thy creation. As soon as man declined from this, he immediately became unprofitable. He is superfluous and a supernumerary in the world, who makes it not his business to advance the honour of God. All things take their profitableness from their end: if they swerve from that

they become unserviceable. If thou takest a plane to warm thee withal, it will not only be useless for that end, but thou also foolish: if thou takest fire to smooth a table, that which is serviceable above all other things, will not only be unserviceable, but also pernicious; it will burn and destroy what thou intendest to polish and perfect. All the utensils of arts, take them besides their proper ends, and they are all disproportioned and to no effect. So man who consecrates not himself to the glory of God, the end for which he was ordained, he is wholly useless and superfluous. Thou expectest grapes from the vine thou hast planted; thou covetest to reap some benefit from all thou hast, why wilt thou thyself only remain unprofitable? That fig-tree which bore no fruit was accursed, and so shall that man be that is unserviceable. How great is thy madness, O man, in not seeking God's greater glory? Greater than if thou shouldest take snow to warm thyself withal, or a painter make use of a carpenter's saw instead of a pencil. Nothing can be imagined more dissonant, more from the purpose, more absurd, than to seek, I will not say thy own credit, but only thy profit, if thou seekest not together God's greater glory by thy virtuous practices.

Propose to thyself an end in thy manner of life, and understand it well, that thou be not like a blind archer. Thou desirest to know the proper ends of all things, that thou mayest be able to use them in order to it; so, not to err in the use of thyself, have thy end always before thy eyes. Thou undoest thyself if thou endeavour anything that makes not for God's greater glory. Fix thy attention upon nothing else; prefix this as the scope and butt of all thy actions. Regard not whether they be painful or pleasant, but whether they be acceptable and

honourable to the Divine Majesty. A sick man that longs for health refuseth not a potion because it is bitter, nor takes a draught of cold water because delectable, but he only reflects upon this, whether it be conducing to health, and upon that account accepts of what is unsavoury and rejects what is sweet. Thou must be equally indifferent to all. When a traveller inquires the way, he accounts it all one whether he be directed to the right hand or the left, so it lead to the place he goes to. He that plays at tables determines not to move this man rather than another, but only that by which he may win the game. So must we stand in the course of this life, inclined no more to health than sickness, to plenty than poverty, to the point of credit than to disgrace. We must use the things of this world no further than they conduce to the glory of God; they are only means and are not to be used for themselves. Embrace nothing which tends not to its end, although it be never so desirable: refuse nothing which makes for it, though otherwise harsh, for that will prove but too pernicious. All will be vain and unprofitable, which conduceth not to God's greater glory. Can that be profitable to a tree which helpeth not to make it fruitful? What will it avail if its leaves be gilded, its stock wrapped up in silk, its boughs hung full of sparkling diamonds? All these will be to small purpose and wholly unserviceable; a little dung is of far more consequence. All treasures and riches of the world will afford thee no commodity, unless they help to glorify God.

O Lord, let all be as dung to me, upon condition I may gain Thee. Let me esteem this one thing n all, if I know them base in comparison of Thee; I seek Thee alone in them and in myself. All

things are nothing in Thy sight; why then shall I prefix any other end to my actions besides Thee, Who art all? Shall I not do as good as nothing, and all I do will be to small purpose? O Light of Truth, grant that the eye of my mind may be sincere, beholding Thee simply and singly in all, that my whole body may be lightsome, and all my works acceptable to Thee. Deceive not thyself, O ignorant spirit; he that errs in his intention errs in all, and he that performs a laudable work, if the intention of God's honour be wanting, he will reap but small fruit: for he that mistakes his way, the further he goes the more he mistakes. He that after a long journey or navigation hath missed of his desired port, and knows that he is out of his way by finding himself in a contrary coast, how sensibly and deeply is he afflicted? Oh, how often, after the course of this life, do many find themselves in an error, frustrated of all their conceived hopes, and despoiled of all their good works, because a zeal of the Divine glory was wanting. If thou wilt not be deceived, seek God's glory and not thy own.

To the King alone of ages, immortal and invisible, be honour and glory. It is honour enough for me that Thou wilt, O Lord be honoured by me. Let me esteem it a great honour to see Thee honoured. Honour exhibited to a parent redounds to his child. Respect done to the head of a University, or rector of a College, hath influence into all their members and subjects. Thou art the head and source of all things, Thou art the Rector of this universe, Thou art my Parent, all Thy honour is also mine. A creature cannot truly be said to receive honour, otherwise than by participating of the honour of his Creator. Let me see Thee, O Lord, honoured, and I shall be honoured; let me seek Thy glory,

and I shall be glorious. Not only my profit, O Lord, but also my honour is linked with Thine. Grant that as Thou didst seek in all Thy works only my honour and my profit, so I and all creatures may only seek Thy honour; and from thence alone will redound to us both honour and profit. Whatsoever I shall do, say, or think, I sacrifice it all to Thy glory. If I chance through negligence or inadvertence to do otherwise, even from this moment I retract it and blush at it. The Angels apply themselves with all their affection to sing Thy praises, they heighten their voices, and rest notwithstanding still confounded; how then shall not I be ashamed of my tepidity and great negligence?

O man, consider the dignity to which thou art raised: from the deepest pit of nonentities, from an abyss of nothing, from thy native dirt and clay to the glory of a God of infinite excellence and purity. Raise thy intention, purify it, deceive not thyself: thou wilt persuade thyself sometimes that thou seekest the pure glory of God, and thou tacitly desirest thy own gust and commodity. What makes thee so anxious and out of patience when things fall not out as thou didst intend, but because thou soughtest thyself? The glory of God is peaceable, it is joyful, it is never frustrated of its effect in those that seek it. Although things happen not as the just man expected, yet they will happen as he desired, to wit, as the Will of God disposed them, and that sufficeth. If I loved God with the whole extent of my affection, in all and through all, I should desire only His goodness, seek His praise, be replenished with zeal, and breathe His glory. He that is past breathing is dead, and he is no better than a dead man who does his actions for any other end but God. All time is lost which is

not spent in seeking eternity. How can we choose but lose the future eternity which is not ours, if we lose the present time which is ours, by not working with a pure intention.

CHAPTER XL.

How careful we must be to do our actions well.

Thy whole day's task must be a doing of good and sufferance of evil. Make it thy whole employment to suffer evil, and to do good. Neither is it enough that thou be cheerful and prompt to this, but thy alacrity must extend itself even to evil and harsh things, that thou be not affrighted with their greatness and noisomeness; as also to patience in good and laudable things, that thou be not cloyed with their multitude and continual exercise. The necessity of patience transcends any function or casualty of our whole life. Upon all occasions there is a necessity of suffering; but it ought to be pleasant, and according to thy palate, to suffer in order to the doing of good. In this there is a two-fold merit, both of patience and the good work. Thou canst never shun the undergoing of some labour, and indeed without labours nothing exquisite will be achieved. We often falter in our virtuous purposes out of a hope of non-suffering, which leaves us in the lurch, while it makes us forbear to embrace the labour and difficulty, which accompany our good purpose, as if perchance at another season the way of virtue would be less thorny. Thou deceivest thyself if thou be not persuaded that it is more necessary to suffer than to live, or that there can be any

part or parcel of our life void of sufferance. One affliction is heir to another; if thou eschewest this, another will not be wanting to succeed. Be thoroughly possessed of this, and a false hope will not make thee remiss in thy pious endeavours, by presuming upon some fitter opportunity, wherein thou thinkest to accomplish thy virtuous exercises with less pain and toil. It is impossible to live without some labour: do not refuse any that is fruitful of virtue. If thou declinest this, thou wilt be forced to embrace another, more harsh and untoothsome. We can only exchange labour, not avoid it. Thou mayest notwithstanding eschew many defects and faults, if thou seekest not curiously to avoid what is unavoidable; labour is certain; either it must be embraced with patience, or repentance, or pain and punishment. Love or repentance is not sufficiently perfect and such as beseems thee, and the infinite goodness and mercy of God exacts at thy hands, unless thou be content to suffer for many years' space, and, as much as in thee lies, the very pains of hell for the least venial transgression. Yea, to render one venial trespass uncommitted thou oughtest willingly to undergo all the torments of the damned. If therefore it be behooveful to embrace such a hell to render undone what is done, what must thou do by way of prevention ere it be done, that it be not done at all? O wretched spirit, be confounded, be confounded! it will not cost thee so dear to eschew sin; it will be enough to shake off slothfulness.

Many make but a slender advance, because they persuade themselves that such an endeavour towards perfection is not requisite to salvation. O ungrateful and pusillanimous creature! why dost thou frame such a miserable conceit of thy beatitude, or settle

such dangerous principles concerning thy eternal weal, and have so narrow and ignoble thoughts of God's glory, which is immense? I beseech thee, if thy salvation depended not only upon the keeping the commandments but also the counsels, and on it did hang the salvation of all men, Angels, and the most sacred Virgin, and Christ's reprievement from the Cross, wouldst thou not use all possible endeavour to compass it? Certainly thou wouldst. Consider then that something of main consequence, to wit, the glory of God and His goodwill and pleasure (which is of higher concernment than the salvation and happiness of the whole world considered by itself, than the life of Christ's Humanity,) exacts perfection at thy hands. If then it be so very important, have a care to be exquisite in each minute action, and this according to the manner of God's proceeding, Whose workmanship is most admirable in little things, as an emmet, a gnat, a bee; and the cunning He showed in the composure of the heavens and stars surpasseth not them in point of art.

Commence each action with a resolution to perform it, Christ's grace assisting thee, more perfectly than ever hitherto, to the benefit of the Church militant, to the glory of the Church triumphant, to the greater honour of God; as if He expected no other benefit from the creation of the world, from the redemption of man, from the goodly furniture of Heaven, where He is to be glorified by all the blessed, besides this action of thine; no otherwise than if thy salvation, the weal of the universe, and glory of the Divinity depended upon each thy least work; as if thou wert not to iterate it again, nor henceforth to do any other, but forthwith to give up the ghost. Be not sparing then of a little

labour, with loss of such a commodity. God desires that thou shouldst perform this work most exactly; and if thou considerest this His desire, thou wilt show thyself extremely perverse if thou compliest not with it, or darest reflect upon any annoyance of thy own. Sufferance is of itself desirable only to imitate Christ our Saviour, without the juncture of any other good. Neither will it be less acceptable towards the avoiding some fault, and accomplishing all most absolutely to God's greater glory.

Man's employment is doing good; for this end hadst thou thy being to do good: but remember that man is born to labour, because without it no good work can be durable or of continuance. Do not frustrate thyself of thy end, but endeavour by the assistance of God's grace to imitate the brave attempts of nature, which strives always what it can to yield thee her fruits most complete, that thou mayest serve God in the completest manner thou canst. Be always mindful that thy services are in all respects extremely slender, nor carry any proportion at all with that glory which is promised thee, nor with the pains of hell which thou hast deserved by thy sins, nor the labours which thy Redeemer did undergo for thy sake, nor the Divine benefits which He hath heaped upon thee, nor the immense Goodness of that God to Whom thy services stand consecrated.

CHAPTER XLI.

That we must shake off all negligence.

Be ashamed, O lukewarm spirit, to sit still in the race when time and place require thy running. Behold how puddles and standing pools do putrify, and iron that lies useless becomes rusty. Go to! the way of spirit is like the eagerness of racers; one must not lag, and how much less stand still? How will one have leisure to sit, when he hath time neither to be weary nor so much as to fall? All indeed run, but one only wins the prize: run so as to reach the goal. If God had created all men at the same instant, endowed with the use of reason, and equal in enrichments of grace, and showed to them all, on the one side the treasures of Heaven's glory, and on the other the hideous torments of hell, and let them know by revelation that one only of all that number was to be saved—to wit, he who served God with most fervour and diligence, who surpassed the rest in sanctity and charity—and that all others were to be sentenced to damnation, which of all these, contemplating the horror and terror of that infernal pit, would not bend all his forces to excel his competitors in sanctity, and so escape those dreadful punishments and obtain happiness, becoming that one who were to be saved? With how much zeal of serving God would each one's heart be replenished? Every one

striving to exceed others, none would be found who would not employ his whole endeavour to the end he might outdo the rest. There would be no place then for loiterers, tepidity would not dare to show her head. But with how much more powerful incentives oughtest thou to be inflamed, to serve God with greater fervency than any Saint who hath hitherto ever trod the paths of this mortal life? The glory of God, and compliance with His holy will, ought in reason to be beyond all comparison a stronger motive and more pressing endearment to the service of God, than that incumbency of thy salvation. O eternal Truth, why should my profit move me more than Thy Will? Why should self-love be more urgent than love of Thee? It is a benefit incomparably greater that many are entitled to Heaven, and for this my obligations to Thee are much heightened: why then art thou now, O infirm spirit, so tepid and slothful? Be mindful of the labours which Christ embraced for thy sake. Put before thy eyes so many youths who forestall thy victory, and tender virgins who lead the way. Behold the fervour of the ancient Fathers; the penance, humility, charity, and torments of Martyrs: why art thou so lazy since thou hast so many precedents?

Yea, although thou aimedst more at thy own commodity than the glory of God, yet it behooved thee not to slacken the reins so much to tepidity. Thou needest not fear lest thy advantage be less. than if thy fervour were eminent above all others, and thou that one who wert to be saved; nay, it imports thee now to be more fervorous and more intensely bent upon God's glory. No services now are frustrated of their salary, and the better they are, the greater glory wilt thou purchase. This

would not be so in case one only man were to be saved; since one might undergo great labours and reap no profit at all; neither would a greater reward be corresponding to greater services, which as then would run hazard of being null and ineffectual, though they were great, for this respect, that they were not the greatest. Nay, although thou didst outrun a great many, almost all, if one alone outstripped thee, the prize would be lost, and all as good as nothing. Now our merits are at a greater certainty and more fruitful; now not the least of our works perisheth; now all our services are recompensed according to the degree of their fervour. Why then should we now be so pitifully sluggish with certain forfeiture of a secure reward? What! If thou wert ascertained that none at all should be damned, but all partake of salvation, that ought not to give thee a pretence of being negligent, but rather heighten thy fervour towards a more ample enrichment of merits and increase of glory.

Go to! the sufferings of this life are not condign or commensurate to the future glory. Suffer not laziness to reside in thee, for it is the moth of merits and scab of virtues, taking all the grace of our actions, rendering them so light of weight, and distasteful to God, that His stomach will not digest them. If thou yieldest thyself to sloth, sadness will not a little annoy thee, being forced to sustain the heat and burden of the day without any comfort, the sting of conscience bereaving thee of that. But promptitude and alacrity will make thee insensible of the incumbrances of this life, and is highly pleasing and acceptable to God. What master of a family loves not to see his servants pleasantly merry and going cheerfully about their work? If a man love to behold a pleasant coun-

tenance, so doth God a cheerful mind. Let not the sad look of thy negligence contristate Almighty God; neither do thou superadd to the bitterness of this life the wormwood of sluggishness: a sluggard partakes neither of the joys of God nor of this world. A tepid religious man in most things is in a worse condition than a worldling. This, though he share not of spiritual comfort, yet he doth of temporal; the tepid for the most part is deprived of both. He that is habituated in sin is not without hope of being converted and acquiring sanctity; but he that grows tepid after his conversion, hath forfeited part of that confidence, there being greater hopes of a sinner than of him. Great sinners very often become great Saints; but it is a piece of a miracle, if he that is tepid became such a one. Experience teacheth us, that it is more difficult for the lukewarm to become fervorous, than for a sinner to become a Saint. For a tepid man is far from resenting his condition as evil; and because he deems himself secure, and that a mediocrity in virtue sufficeth to salvation, he doth acquiesce in this: he must notwithstanding be wary and dread his security, for the danger is very imminent. But, which is no mean subject of terror, God calls and makes inquiry after sinners; Christ takes his refection with them; but as for the frigid, they turn His stomach, and He loathingly vomits them out of His mouth. Shall I say something no less frightful? The tepid obstruct the current of God's mercy, and suspend the influences of His profuse liberality, while He is bountiful towards the greatest sinners; but towards the negligent He is as it were sparingly parsimonious, not communicating to them what He oftentimes more willingly confers upon the other. I will add something yet more formidable, which

ought to make each bone of our body shiver and quake. God, Who is still giving to all, erecting everywhere trophies of His bounty, with the tepid He is on the taking hand, depriving them of those talents which He had mercifully lent them before. What more noxious than to debar Him, as much as in us lies, from being beneficent? What worse than not to suffer Him to be good, impeding the activity of His goodness and munificence? Is he not accursed who is the occasion of such a curse? How deservedly then is he accursed who doth the work of God negligently!

Many things which are evil are at least serviceable in some respect; but slothfulness is so naughtily naughty, that it is in no sort conducible. What can be imagined worse than heinous sins? Yet these, many times, through the wonderful Wisdom and Goodness of God, Who knows how to extract good out of evil, conduce to our conversion and sanctification, we seeking Him after such foul lapses with greater fervour and humility. Slothfulness obstructs all this; it is so hurtfully evil, that it shows itself in part less good and proficuous, than the very malice itself of greater sins. Slothfulness is the worm of time; it eats and spoils the choicest things we have; yea, it is an enemy to eternity, lessening life eternal by lessening our merits; and it also wastes our temporal by its mortiferous idleness. If thou demand whose life is shorter, I will undoubtedly reply, that of the negligent, though he protract it to a hundred years. If thou ask whose is longer, I will answer that of the diligent, though he live but for a short space: death and slothfulness is equivalently the same thing. What merchant would sit idle at home, if by one day's pains he could compendiate the return of a thousand years? Do not

thou set light by time; one day of fervour is more valuable than a million of remissness and tepidity. A short life full of vigorous ardency is equivalent —nay, prevalent—to a long one, if it be cold and phlegmatic. If thou covet to live long, live diligently.

But how shameful is the shame of sluggish idleness? How ridiculously infamous would he be, who being picked out from among all the peers of the realm to fight a duel in his King's behalf, having before boasted much of his valour, should now in the very lists of combat, where his sovereign and all his Court stand spectators, not have the courage to draw his sword, nor move his arm to make a thrust, but bend all his forces to flight, leaving his adversary an unbloody victory, O sluggard, thou maintainest God's quarrel, many Angels beholding and envying thy happiness, who would take it for a great honour to suffer and combat for the glory of God as thou mayest. This favour is done thee to be champion. Thou art become a theatre or spectacle to God, the Blessed Virgin, His Saints and Angels. Thou hast often promised to behave thyself valiantly, why art thou now, being come to the push, so dastardly cowardish? O infamy of nature! do not defame the grace of God, nor frustrate those supplies which are kept for a reserve. Why art thou so heartless in this work? Consider how fervently God desires that thou perform it with fervour.

CHAPTER XLII.

How incommodious a thing is sleepiness.

What more seemly to season the first thoughts of the day than the Ancient of days, my God, that so our mind in its first undertakings may be consecrated to Him? The thought and love of God must not be intermitted, and how much less denied at a seasonable time? Pay the first fruits of life to the Author of life, presenting thyself in the morning before Him. We must prevent the sun in Thy benediction, and adore Thee, O Lord, at the rising of the same: when in the midst of our sleep, it being as yet night, the pulse of the bell or some inspiration calls us to rise, and behold, Thou our Spouse comest, and it is requisite to go forth to meet Thee.

To make this encounter fruitfully, it conduceth not a little to prepare oil over night, lest the lamp of thy love, O my soul, want fuel to feed its flame, and thou like a foolish virgin be shut out, which is too terrible. Premeditate what language shall deliver thy first salutes to thy Spouse, and what affairs thou art to negotiate in time of prayer. This being done, if thou betake thyself to rest with sorrow, thou wilt rise with cheerfulness. If thou hast a loathing of sleep, thou wilt covet watching with much alacrity. How can a soul enamoured of God, choose but grieve that it must cease to love

Him, praise Him, improve its stock of merits, and that all advantages of increasing His glory, and its love towards so dear a Spouse, must be suspended? How can it endure to see itself sustained by God, loved by Him, and regaled in this interim with innumerable benefits, and not be able to relove Him, or as much as to be thankful for such high favours. Wherefore it is requisite both before and after sleep, to make amends for that suspension of love and merits with more ardent affections and celestial desires, supplying that loss of life, wherein we cannot pour out our whole hearts upon God, and be absorbed in Him. We must procure, by this very cessation of merit and love, to merit as much, if it were in our power, as if we were awake. Usurers even while they sleep increase their money, and thou wilt do the same, if, conforming thyself to the disposals of Heaven with obedience and resignation, thou make an ardent oblation of thyself, and bear with patience this misery and the incident necessities of man's life. He that embraceth patiently a necessary death, whether it proceed naturally from some disease, or be violently caused by another man, he merits by it; so shalt thou if it be harsh and noisome to thee to repose and sleep, as it is to those that serve God fervently; if, I say, thou accept of this necessary burden with equanimity, it being wisely so ordained by the Author of all wisdom. Perchance if thou consider things in themselves, and how much more burdensome sleep is than death to a true lover of God, thou mayest merit by sleeping patiently for His sake, as by dying for patience. Merit resides amidst great patience, and patience is there greatest, where greatest grievances are borne most patiently. Among all the burdens of man's life, and all th

annoyances which besiege it so closely, none is greater than that of sleep, or more worthily to be repented, sin being excepted. Other calamities are only tormentors of life; sleep for its interim bereaves us of it: other calamities are only opposite to the commodities of life; sleep for a time impugns its substance: other calamities are in such sort noisome to our temporal life, that they exceedingly conduce to eternal, by affording matter of merit, by raising our minds towards God, and drawing our affections as by an attractive quality; sleep in itself, during its reign, is an enemy both to corporal and eternal life, forasmuch as it causeth a vacancy both from merit and all thought of heavenly things: other calamities are most welcome to God's zealot, because in them he doubles his spiritual advantages —love is put to the test, God is glorified; but sleep hath nothing at all desirable, a cessation both of loving and honouring God attending it step by step: wherefore sleep is more noisome, and for a two-fold, yea, manifold reason, more burdensome than death itself to one that is enamoured of God. Death tyrannizeth only over the body; sleep over both body and soul. Sleep on this behalf seems so much worse than death, by how much the soul is better than the body; nay, much more, to wit, as much as the whole man, soul and body, is better than the body alone: for death only deprives thee of thy body, but sleep of thy soul also as well as of it. Death aims only at the destruction of our body, a thing frail and corruptible; sleep at the soul also, a thing eternal and immortal, which gives life to the body, it being wholly insensible but for it. Death destroys a man; sleep doth as much for a space of time as annihilate him. Death is not to be dreaded, for it leaves the best part of man untouched, to wit,

his soul, which makes him a man, by which he loves God, and apprehends His mercy and goodness, which is the glory of a man, and ought to be his sole content and joy; yea, it leaves it more refined, without impediment, that it may honour and love God more expeditely. Sleep overwhelms and enters the noblest part of man, unsouling, as it were, the soul itself. Tell me, I pray, which wouldst thou resent most, to die or to be annihilated? If thou give glory to God by dying because such is His blessed Will, wilt thou not do the same if thou covet upon the same motive to be annihilated? Therefore if a patient acceptance of death be meritorious, so will also a patient acceptance of sleep, if thou relish it as an equal burden. If thou merit, by embracing with patience the vexatious incumbrances of this life, why shalt thou not also merit by sleep, if it be the greatest incumbrance of all? Yea, it being the sole and only thing which living and dying we must deem cumbersome: for neither in this life nor after death is there anything, sin being set aside, more burdensome to one that is feelingly devoted to the service of God. What are accounted the burdens which press so heavily upon this life, but its sufferings and miseries? But one should be so far from esteeming sufferance a burden, that it ought to be the scope and butt of his desires. Next after God there is nothing more expetible than to suffer for God, exhibiting this as the credentials of our love; for by so doing we perfect the knot of true charity, being more straitly united to Him, we dilate the confined rays of His glory, and merit to be partakers of the same. Nobody knows thoroughly how burdensome sleep is to us, besides him who is able to make a true estimate of the immensity of God's glory, the invaluableness of His love, and

the least degree of grace; in order to all which, for this interim, there is a dead surcease, and a suspension of all traffic for new merits. After the close of this life, what is noisome to the just besides Purgatory? But if thou be then in a condition of suffering, it ought not to be resentive at all, thou being thereby refined and purified, thy Spouse trimming thee up in such a dress as may well beseem His bed-chamber. If He leave it then wholly in thy power to love God, what cause of tergiversation, since He leaves arbitrary to thee what thou wishest and desirest? Where thou hast opportunity to suffer and love, there is no just ground of complaint. If it were put to thy choice whether thou wouldst sleep or die for half an hour's space, a soul truly inflamed with the ardours of charity would of itself prefer death, that it might not be reduced to cessation of love. Yea, it would not thirst more after the resurrection of the body, than after avoiding all unnecessary excess of sleep, though but for a quarter of an hour, as much as might be without impairing its corporal health. For the mean of discretion is everywhere to be observed, and we must take a necessary repose, though against our will, that the functions of our mind may be vigorous and masculine, fitly disposed for all enterprises to God's glory, as also for prayer; lest if we indiscreetly deprive ourselves of it, we be heavy at our devotions, too drowsy and languishing, and so by little and little quite benumbed; and what will then be the issue, but that we perform them with little fruit? But to be too indulgent to sleep beseems the dead rather than the living. And a soul weighing things in themselves, that is with an impartial balance, and seized with the heat of Divine love, to avoid this inconvenience, all acts of love and praise surceasing

for that interim, it would perchance rather make choice of a perpetual death of the body; because in that case one may love and enjoy God, which alone sufficeth and is the chief desire of an enamoured soul, but being so charmed and stupified it cannot. Although one will not easily conceive this, who doth not experience in himself the avaricious incentives of Divine Love and its restless longings and motions, nor how contemptibly an inflamed heart spurns at all self-commodity. But we must not measure the ardour of true love and a devoted affection by the ell of our lukewarmness; rather by what we behold in those that fondly dote even to madness upon a perishable beauty, we may guess at the feelings and flames of a pretender to an eternal and never-fading one. But if thy breast harbour not fuel for such a heat, shun at least as much as thou canst the chillness of tepidity and sleepiness.

If it were intimated to thee that forthwith thou must be annihilated, such tidings would fill thee with horror, why then wilt thou so joy in sleep, it being all one as if for such a respite thou wert annihilated. Apprehend the incommodities of sleep, which is an evil and manifold death, it being very opposite to a four-fold life; for sleep deprives us of the chief life of our body, in which it is equivalent to death itself: it takes away the life of our soul, which is then as if it were not at all, and in this it surpasseth death: sleep is also in some sort injurious to the life of grace and the eternal life, by causing such an interruption of merit. What then can be more prejudicial to us? Wherefore one that burns with the the true flame of Divine love, and is seized with an ardent desire of praising so great a good, is hugely covetous of the least advantages of time, and deems any unnecessary expense in that kind

an irreparable loss; and consequently he goes to sleep with much regret, accepting with patience this necessity imposed by God upon life, and making to Him an oblation of it; taking it in good part, since His holy will is such, to be deprived for this interim of what he much more covets, which is to love and praise God, and be restless in His service; and as much as in him lies he covets not to sleep, but rather to busy himself in the former actuations, thinking every hour a day till he return to his wonted employment. Thou also must put on this disposition of will, and offer it to God, and compose thyself like one ready to give up the ghost, saying with Christ, "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." By thus behaving thyself thou shalt after a manner merit by that death and vacancy of sleep, so untoothsome and distasteful to thy relish.

Conceive also ardent desires of that ever-during life, when without interruption thou shalt enjoy God, and bewail the miseries of this life, since thou must seek repose and relaxation for thy exhausted spirits in a thing of all others most burthensome to thee and prejudicial to all, to wit, sleep. How can life itself choose but be noisome, its very rest being so restless, and its advantages so disadvantageous? It is a lamentable thing, that life must be repaid at the very charges and expenses of life, since the lover of God esteems sometimes a short sleep more damageable than the loss of a long life. When thou art laid to repose, endeavour to seal up thy eyes and heart with the ferventest act of love which ever thou didst make in thy whole life, and even before thou fallest asleep desire to rise as soon as may be, proposing at thy first waking to unseal thy heart and actuate it in more fervent ejaculations than hitherto thou hast done, so to compass in that

instant a new purchase of grace. It will not a little conduce to this to beg the concurrence of thy Angel Guardian, as also to use a spare and frugal diet. Strike up this bargain with thy body; in the meanwhile repose, take thy pennyworths, but be sure to rise as soon as the bell calls thee to work. Like as the soul for the good of the body dies as it were by night and is buried, so must the body die by day for the good and benefit of the soul. While it is awake let the body be dead to this world, as when the soul is asleep it is dead for that respite to Heaven, that is, to meritorious actions and pious thoughts. Procure in the meanwhile that thy body, as much as may be, supply elevations and obsecrations of thy soul, the which not being as then in a capacity to pray, the body must do it by lying modestly in a beseeming posture, and for more decency not right upward. We compose corpses, and embalm them against corruption, though they must shortly be the food of worms and spoil of time; so let us compose and dispose ourselves in this death of sleep, that we may be fit for the chaste embracements of Christ. Lie with thy arms or fingers forming a cross. This treasure of thine must thou coffin up together with thyself till the morning revive thee; for treasures were wont to be buried and deposited with the dead. Be sure thou never desert the Cross; but whilst thy mind cannot cling to it thy body must, carrying always about with it the mortification of Jesus. Christ, when He was dead would bequeath to us a pledge of His love, by receiving a wound with a spear. Thou also in this short death, must give such an earnest-penny of thy affection. And by this means as Christ in His sleep merited at thy hands by shedding, from His Heart's Wound, water and

Blood, a special pledge of love: so thou also, in thy death of sleep, shalt even then merit at the hands of Christ, for such a precedent desire and disposition. Let this be an argument, that while thou sleepest thy heart watcheth; not unlike cranes who while they sleep carry a stone in their talon, the fall whereof forthwith awakes them.

CHAPTER XLIII.

That we must rise fervorously to our morning prayer.

If with loathing thou didst betake thyself to rest, thou wouldst with a cheerful alacrity rise in the morning to thy task; neither would it be necessary for the Master of the family to hire so early His workmen. Thou wilt show thyself too effeminate if thou be not valiant against sleep, but suffer thyself to be vanquished by a thing of all others the most unmanly, being, without bonds, chained hand and foot like a captive; in such sort that thou canst neither help thyself nor others, but must be content to sit in the shadow of death. It would not be needful that the voice of thy Beloved, knocking at the door of thy heart, should rouse thee. Conceive the sound and pulse to be the noise of thy Spouse calling and inviting thee with most sweet and amorous language to open the door; and He calls thee His sister, His love, His dove, His unspotted. Open to Me, saith He, O My sister, My love, My dove, My unblemished. Love makes Him call thee so often His, neither can He be satiated with calling thee so. O Lord, what beholdest Thou in me that

can so transport and enamour Thee! Can it be reasonable that I disgust Thee for a little ease? But if thou hasten not, O my soul, to open because Thou art His and for love of Him, do it at least out of mere compassion. To move thee more forcibly He presently adds: Because My hair is full of dew and My locks of the drops of the night. Thou wouldst not demur to open even to a stranger and an enemy in this piteous plight, and why not to thy God, thy Lover, Who does it all for thy sake? Beware He depart not if thou linger? What can be imagined more attractive and comfortable, than this voice of the Spouse knocking so friendly, that He may banish all laziness from a pious soul? Who will not be more confounded than was Urias, to lie in bed while Christ stands expecting, not under a pavilion but in the open air, exposed to the injuries of the night.

Robbers stick not to rise by night, to make their booty and massacre others; and wilt thou, when the good of thy soul, and God's glory lies at stake, be so tardy? The Angel calling Peter when he was asleep said, "Rise quickly." Thou art more dead when thou art buried in sleep; imitate at least the dead in rising. In the twinkling of an eye, in a moment, shall the dead bodies arise at the command of an Angel. Jesus will not have thee be slower when He calls, than when an Angel. The heavenly spirits take it ill, they being by nature most quick and agile, to see any one whom they awake any whit sluggish, or rearing themselves with stretchings and yawnings; and they awaken us most willingly, because the very sight of this drowsiness, so opposite to their agility, is not a little offensive to them. A certain servant of Christ, one of our Society, by name John Carrera, was every morning

before day called by his good Angel to go to prayer. But this heavenly monitor once absented himself for many days, till, being appeased with continual prayers and long fasts, he returned at length to his charitable office, admonishing John that for this reason he withdrew his comfortable presence, because, being once overcome with the drowsy weariness of the preceding day's labour, he had not risen with such speed to his accustomed devotions. So inconsiderable a fault (if it were a fault) so highly offended the Angel, although it were not perceived by his conscience, which was so tenderly nice and delicate. They esteem the fervour and prayers of us miscreants so much, that they deem not their own officiousness to equalize their worth, and give us a gentle correction, that there may not be so much as a false shadow of idleness, where we traffic in such real goods.

Therefore be not slow at the hour of rising. Labour with great speed to overtake any one that is before thee, that thou mayest be the first that our Lord, coming laden with His gifts, shall light upon, so to have the first choice and handsel of His graces, He disburdening Himself upon the first He meets. Thou shouldst run towards Christ charged with His Cross to ease Him of it, and be crucified in His place; run to Him fraught with grace, to be enriched by Him. What soul can be so senseless and prodigal as not to rise with all speed to receive so many gifts, and impart kisses to her Spouse? How can she be said to love God, if she return not swifter than any thunderbolt to love her Beloved, Whom overnight she desired so vehemently? One must rise more expeditely than if the bed and bed-clothes were all in a flame. One will rise more expeditely if the fire of love be enkindled in his heart.

Procure at that instant to make amends for the vacancy of sleep, wherein thou couldst not actuate thyself in the love of God, by a most fervorous elevation of mind, by a most flagrant charity and a total holocaust of thyself, the perfectest that hitherto thou ever didst offer upon the altar of thy heart. Suppose thyself in such a condition, as if in that moment of thy awaking thou wert newly created by God, to love and serve Him for that day alone: for that sole end is this day's life granted to thy use. If one that is in a state of beatitude were annihilated by God, and forthwith created anew with all his qualities and former perfections, with what impetuousness of will in that very moment would he ingulf himself in the abyss of the Divinity? Do thou endeavour to put on a like fervour, after this thy annihilation by sleep and resuscitation by awaking. How deep a sense and profound reverence did Adam and the Angels conceive towards their Creator, in the first instant of their perceived creation? Imitate the Blessed Virgin, who being in the first moment of her conception created in grace, and privileged with the perfect use of reason, with what intenseness of affection did she cast herself into the arms of Almighty God? What thanks did Christ our Lord render to His Heavenly Father in the first instant of the Hypostatical Union? Yea, with how great love did He then particularly think upon thee by name. When it stood written in the front of the Book that He was to do the Will of God, He said, O Heavenly Father, even for that contemptible caitiff, John, will I also undergo a whipping, a crowning, a cross, ignominy, even death itself; I give, I offer, I sacrifice Myself wholly for his salvation. And will it not be also thy duty to reflect upon Christ and say, O my God, this day

for my Saviour's sake will I embrace all corporal labours and anguish of mind, that I may love, serve, and glorify Him with all the extent of my affection?

If God had created thee in a state of grace in an ample freedom of will, and had by Divine revelation indoctrinated thee in all the mysteries of our faith, and thou didst see thyself dear to Him, and His Blessed Son become Man and crucified with unspeakable love for thy sake; were it not thy duty in these circumstances to give thyself wholly to God and pour thyself forth upon Him? It is all one as if He had but just now created thee. Be of good courage, thou shalt awake in the state of grace. Behold thou findest thy redemption accomplished to thy hand by the death and torments of thy God; and this with so early a love, that Christ suffered for thee a thousand and so many years before thou wert born, that He might have plenty of grace in store for thee. Neither Adam, nor St. Michael, nor Gabriel, nor any other of the Angels, no nor their Queen herself, the sacred Virgin, found such preventing diligence, such a seat of love, to wit, that God had already died for their releasement. Be inflamed then forthwith with a reciprocal love and burning desires towards so magnificent a goodness, so speedily provident over thy affairs, and do not contemn such an anticipation in what concerns thy eternal weal. Adam stood in expectation of this benefit the space of four thousand years; but the benefit itself hath expected thee already above sixteen hundred: and it is neither right nor reason that thou requite such sedulity and quickness with so much sluggishness and delay. Procrastinate no longer thy conversion to God, Who hath so long expected thee in a great deal of patience.

Put the case a proffer of coming to life were made to the souls, which now are only in a possibility of existence, and this upon the same conditions, helps, and favours, which God hath deigned to bestow this day upon thee; how would they joy, how happy would they esteem themselves, how officiously would they spend that day, how would they in the very entrance of life sacrifice themselves to such a Benefactor? And what if He should make this proffer to those whom this very night He hath sentenced to hell-fire, while He so lovingly stood sentry over thee in thy repose? With what incredible fervour would they at their first return to life consecrate themselves to Almighty God, as also the remnant of that day and their whole life, if they did but once behold themselves adorned with Divine grace, with supernatural habits, and such opportunities of serving so beneficial a God? Be thou confounded for not sacrificing thyself more fervently to Him, Who is much more munificent towards thee. It is a greater matter to have preserved thee from damnation, than to have reprieved thee being once condemned. Spur up thyself to outstrip the fervour of many just souls, and be thankful that thou findest not thyself this morning plunged in hell, but freed from it; as also from so many dangers and sins, which innumerable others have this night incurred. Do thou alone wish to give Him, if it were possible, that glory which all the Saints will be still rendering through the great day of eternity; which desire thou must unfeignedly iterate in the course of the whole day, and that with sighs from thy very heart. Neither in the morning only, but oftener, as if then newly set on foot and created, begin the journey of God's service always with a fresh and vigorous courage.

CHAPTER XLIV.

That our daily fervour must be retained.

Thou providest but fondly for this day's life, neither art thou secure of that, if thou delayest it till to-morrow. If the use of this day's life be granted thee, live well and perfectly; for he only is said to live who lives well. Thou diest miserably being yet alive, if thou leadest not a good life. Each morning when thou awakest propose to live that day as well as possibly thou canst, as if thou wert undoubtedly to die the same night. Delay not the amendment of any defect till another day, which perchance thou wilt never see: either the day or thy will will fail thee. The day to come will go well with thee if the present do. One must never hazard a thing so good as is a good life, but be always in an active fruition of it. Thou art industrious in avoiding anything that may endanger life; and why dost thou by delaying prepare and call danger to a good life. Live to-day, and protract not to amend what is amiss after this week, or month, or the disposal of this affair. To-day God is our Lord, and to-day must thou be the servant of God; for He is thy servant to-day, since He to-day makes the sun rise to thy behoof. He delays not His gifts till to-morrow, neither must thou thy services. To-day God heaps benefits upon thee which thou canst not challenge: be not thou

wanting to services which He exacts. The services of another day will not suffice for the beneficence of their day; why wilt thou have them satisfy for the day past and for the benefits of the present? Its own goodness is not sufficient to pay its debt; why wilt thou make it pay for the malice of another, God especially redoubling thy debts and His graces? To-day God is God, and to-day thou art His creature: to-day Christ is thy Redeemer, and thou to-day His redeemed. Jesus is Christ yesterday and to-day: thou hast a being to-day, and shalt perchance not have one to-morrow. To-day and every moment art thou a debtor to God, who impends continually His omnipotency to thy behoof; thou also must each moment impend all thy forces in His love and service. How darest thou incur the loss of one hour, since thou canst not make recompense for the least benefit which thou receivest this instant, flowing from the ocean of God's infinite love? How darest thou suspend the quitting thy obligation for the interval of one day or hour? for if God suspended His munificence but for a piece of an hour, thou wouldst not be in the world; or if He suspended His indulgence, thou wouldst be in hell. An eternal salary is promised thee, thou must not merit by interrupted services. If thou wilt truly live, never intermit to live well: this is an eternal truth. O Truth, give me grace to serve Thee truly henceforth for all eternity: and that I may eternally live with Thee, teach me how I may truly live to-day.

Thou must, O remiss spirit, daily arm thyself to combat, and awake with great cheerfulness, as one would do to battle, the sign of falling on being given, as it were, by this trumpet—Thou shalt love thy Lord God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, with all thy strength. Let

this precept alarm thee in the morning, and persuade thyself that each day of thy life is not only a day of warfare, but a set day for combat. How cheerfully do soldiers rise that morning, wherein they receive orders to prepare for battle. A soldier is not found unarmed in the day of combat: thou must make account thou art to fight every day: arm thyself early in prayer with a most fervent charity, with a most profound self-contempt, with patience, mortification, and all the stratagems thou canst invent. The sole suspicion of a battle arms a soldier, and makes him continue so for many days, because he expects to fight one day; what ought the certainty and belief of a daily conflict to operate in us? Dispose all thy actions in the morning, and despose them in the hands of God; and purpose to be twice as good to-day as thou wast yesterday, lest in the daytime the devil interpose himself, and prevail so far as to make thee abate of thy fervour.

Rise well animated against all the difficulties which attend this life, and if any of them accost thee, or thou become slothful, be not faint-hearted, but rather joyful. For why? An occasion is presented of a greater victory. Assail them undauntedly, like one valiant soldier encountering another, who is not dismayed at his presence nor seeks a starting-hole, but stands his ground, and joys to have met him whom otherwise he would have sought. Fight stoutly all day long, and at night expect to die. The life of man is a warfare, in which life is always hazardous and labour certain. As often as thou art but a little foiled, fight more eagerly, and persuade thyself that such foils will be frequent, for the just man is foiled seven times a day: but rise forthwith with redoubled courage, as

a soldier who having received a wound flies more keenly at his adversary. Where thou perceivest any breach make it up incontinently, and fortify it more strongly by calling a squadron of reasons to thy assistance, which must be at hand like a valorous and approved reserve, mustered from thy morning meditation, repentance and humility leading them up. And delay not to repair that negligence, for otherwise thy vigour of spirit will easily slacken. He that receives but a slight wound will faint unless he stop the effusion of blood; and by delay that which is otherwise but an inconsiderable hurt will become mortal. Apply a remedy out of hand, and defer it not till night or another day: for although it seem nothing, it will hinder the progress of thy other actions. If any one have got a thorn in his hand or foot he pulls it out immediately; he lets it not alone till night or some few days after, otherwise he will be able neither to walk nor do anything else; and the delay may be such, that by festering it may prove a canker, and cannot be cured but by cutting off.

Yet for all this be not so contristated for any small defect, as that it smell rather of pride than repentance, and thou be hindered thereby from performing thy other exercises, which require a great deal of alacrity. Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga had reason to say, that those who were too anxious over their small defects did not sufficiently know themselves. Thou art all misery, but thou hopest one day to be happy: be less contristated and more humble. If thou acknowledge thy misery, a fixed hope in Almighty God will lesson thy anxiety; and despair of any good will increase humility in thee. Many are therefore dejected, because they grieve not so much for having offended God, as for their

own infirmity and vileness, while they find themselves so impotent and faint-hearted; and because this affection naturally sympathizeth with self-love, it is more resented, and sometimes occasioneth no small harm. Grieve only for having offended God; but rejoice forthwith by a confidence in Jesus, and congratulate with thyself for thy own vileness, for thou art nothing of thyself but only by God, which is much better for thee. By this means the defect itself will more animate thee, and render thee more confident by putting thy trust in God, since thou dost actually experience, and, as it were, by groping palpably perceive, that by thy own strength thou canst do nothing, but only by God and with God, on Whom thou mayest much more securely rely; for He is far greater in goodness than thy goodwill can be in constancy.

Persuade thyself that perchance each hour thou wilt falter a hundred times, but purpose, God's grace assisting thee, to rise again a thousand. By how much more frequently thy lapses are, rise so much more confidently, because thou art more conscious of thy own insufficiency. Then is our hope more purely and sincerely fixed in God, when we despair totally of ourselves; and then experience itself will teach us this, when we see ourselves without end to fail in our good purposes: God permits that, because we do not sufficiently humble ourselves. If thou wert truly humble thou wouldst redress many inconveniences, and speak nothing but victories. Humble thyself in the presence of God; mistrust thyself and trust in Him, and being armed with this, live this day with much circumspection, diligence, and desire, as if the whole multitude of men were created this day, and of all that world one only were to be saved, he who attained to the

highest pitch of charity and most resigned indifferency of will: for which end though to others were allotted the space of a hundred years, yet thou shouldst have but this day's respite. Thou art obliged to do more now to honour and pleasure God, than in any contingency and supposition whatsoever for any other respect, even that of salvation.

CHAPTER XLV.

Of maintaining our fervour.

Our spiritual life depends no less upon the heart, than our corporal: our heart being kept untainted and well guarded, our spirit will be in safety. Man's heart is the consecrated altar of God, and the throne of the Holy Ghost. Thou must preserve it with all solicitude, that it may be free from this world, and not defiled with the images of terrene and impertinent things, with which the world and the devil, by the windows of thy senses, batter thee as with so many engines. Thou must be more careful of thy heart than of an altar, an oratory, and consecrated chalices, where we offer sacrifice, worship, and keep the very Body of Christ in the Sacrament. With how much diligence, and under how many locks do usurers keep their money and the instruments of death? With how much niceness do those that delight in rarities keep any choice jewel, or foreign novelty, making presently a cabinet for it, that the least grain of dust may not tarnish it? And canst thou think that the gem of the Divinity and the Holy Ghost can be preserved with requisite decency, without an exquisite care-

fulness? If thou didst carry the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist in thy hands, how solicitous wouldst thou be not to let it fall; and if thou carry God in thy heart, why wilt thou be less attentive? The heart is a most delicate member, any little offence to it is extremely prejudicial, any trifling wound is mortal to the body; and in like manner any negligence in the custody of our heart doth much prejudice the spirit.

The kingdom of God is within us: why do we beg miseries abroad by our senses? An unblemished heart is the oracle of God. He speaks within us: how can we hearken attentively if we be gazing and wandering abroad? While thou conversest with one thou givest not ear to another that interrupts thee: how canst thou hear God, being distracted with so many affairs? Why dost thou desire to gaze abroad upon any beautiful object, to tickle thy ears with pleasing sounds, to feed thy fancy with foreign news, since thou hast God within thee, in Whom all beauty is comprised, all pleasure resides as in its centre, and a perpetual newness is discoverable even to the blessed Angels themselves, though they be in a perpetual fruition even from the very infancy and nonage of the world? They beheld Him before the prevarication of Adam, and still He is new to their eyes. Which of the Blessed would relinquish the vision and conversation of God, and separate from Him to behold any curiosity upon earth? Or who, that is placed but at the gates of Heaven, would for that end recede thence? Oh, how much also is he to be pitied, who, in expectation of this earthly trumpery, hinders his progress in spirit, forsaking the portal of Heaven, which is a well-guarded heart; leaves God alone, and sometimes his own heart too, expelling God

from it, in such sort that he can neither know Him perspicuously nor hear Him expeditely. That thou mayest be able to contemplate thyself in a mirror, thou first of all wipest off the dust: how canst thou hope to see God in thy heart, if thou daub it over with the clay of terrene affections?

If one should tell thee that St. Paul the Apostle, newly come from the third Heaven, were in the streets explaining and unfolding hidden mysteries, thou wouldst leave all though never so pleasing and profitable, and wouldst run with much speed, though far distant, to hear and see him. Behold thou needest not go one step to hear God inculcating things salutiferous, and teaching hidden secrets while He comes to thee and sojourns with thee. Why dost thou not leave these exterior things, so fruitlessly burdensome, overcoming all itch of novelties and vain curiosities, by which thy fervour doth so evaporate? This ought to be so highly prized, that the servant of God, Father Francis Villanova, was wont to say, that although it were told him that an Angel were come from Heaven and stood in the market-place disclosing wonderful and stupendous mysteries, and that great concourse were made thither, he would not stir one foot, only to overcome curiosity. And certainly it were much better not to see an Angel, than to be overcome by it, if that were the only motive of seeing him. What retainest thou now of all the vanities thou hast beheld, besides some impediments perchance to contemplating God, thy mind being burdened with vain fancies, and images of things both false and frivolous? The less thou seest the more thou lessenest thy desire, and occasions of error. A heart shut up to the world is the open gate of truth, which gate is shut by giving free scope to

our exterior senses: they are these material things that shut it. Wherefore thou must always keep within at home, and not go forth to externs but with leave from God, and for obedience and His glory. Then they will cause no hindrance. But forthwith as soon as ever thou hast done thy business retire home again, resaluting and speaking to God, Who is there expecting thee. Yea, recollect thyself now and then privily in the very dispatch itself. Steal thyself from thy employments, and put thyself in the presence of God. Whatsoever thou art to enterprize weigh it well beforehand, and offer it up to God, and as much as thou canst have perpetual recourse to Him. Visit Him in thy heart, ask His advice, and implore with humility His favourable assistance.

But the chief gate which man must set a guard upon is his mouth lest its words prove the outlet of devotion. Oh, how often do many sell God at a lower rate than did Judas, since they sell Him for one word! Simon Magus was cashiered, for coveting to buy the Holy Ghost with money: others lose Him not for money, but a little breath and air of their mouth. O most Holy Spirit, Who utterest nothing but oracles of truth, how can I relinquish Thee to attend to the forgeries of men, or myself to speak vanities? Conduct me with my Jesus into the desert of my heart, that there thou mayest instruct, illuminate, and strengthen me to bear Thy Cross. O God, O Christ of my heart, grant me grace to follow Thee out of the world and worldly crowds, that I may die with Thee out of the city. Thou, charged with Thy heavy Cross, didst walk out of Jerusalem to die for me, and accomplish my salvation in the solitude; instructing me how to go out of this world and seek Thee in myself, and

bear Thy Cross, and be crucified to the world in the solitude of my heart. I wish my life could be said to be like a warfare upon earth! A soldier forsakes parents, allies, friends, country, commodities, and embraceth as it were a voluntary banishment in a foreign land, exposing himself both body and soul to most evident danger, for a little base pelf. Why will not a soul desirous of Christ, in order to gain the chiefest good, and lock it up in the cabinet of its heart, withdraw itself from the tumults of men, and quit the miseries which attend their affairs, so to evade more present dangers both of body and soul, and be replenished with heavenly consolations?

CHAPTER XLVI.

How constant one ought to be in the practice of good works.

Men toil many years with great constancy for the inconstant and fleeting goods of this world: why then are we so variously fickle in the pursuit of a constant and eternal glory which never will fade? Men, though they cark and care, toil and moil their whole life long, cannot get temporal goods, albeit they pursue them without respite. How can we presume to gain eternity, since we are as changeable as any weathercock? What pains do robbers, usurers, and the lecherous undergo to compass their wicked designs, though they attempt things both unknown and uncertain? Why can we, for love of virtue and the honour of God, sustain nothing with constancy? He that hopes for a continual and eternal good, unjustly shuns labours in its pursuance.

He that is to be always happy must be always good, for—

> Each day condemns man's irreligious facts;
> All seasons open are to virtuous acts,

as saith St. Prosper. The greatest grace of all others is to preserve the grace that is given thee, and thy chief work not to surcease from doing works. As a creature would be very deformed without head and life, such a monster is a good life without a corresponding end. We have received grace without any pains, but we must conserve it both by grace and pains. The beginning of a thing is accounted half its accomplishment; but unless it end well, all comes to nothing. In the matter of perseverance the end is all in all, for nothing is done so long as anything remains undone. It imports little to have laboured hard all one's life long, if he falter in the end. The sole last moment of perseverance is more available than all the years by-past, for all their fruit proves rotten, if it did not borrow thence a preserving soundness.

Thou wilt think it a hard task to persevere, but it is much harder to begin again, and much more than that, to begin often. Wherefore it is both more easy and more conducible, to persevere once than to begin often. Horses force themselves less in a continued course of drawing a chariot, than, after having stood still, when they are to move it again. Water which hath been once heated, being taken off the fire, becomes more cold than at first. If fervour be wanting in thy proceedings, thou also perchance wilt be more tepid than in the beginning. Many grow faint-hearted in the course of perseverance because they find difficulty in doing good, but they do not therefore evade that difficulty; for it is only perseverance that makes all easy. If thou

hadst the courage to begin a hard task, thou mayest well continue it, that being much more easy. Thou hast found so long by experience that it is neither disproportioned to thy strength nor grace, why then, contrary to so long proof, art thou now diffident, thinking thyself unable to bear it? What is either past or to come is not burdensome for the present. Do not grasp the difficulty all at once, for it comes not so, but by piecemeal, commensurate to the parts of time. As thou wast able before to support it, so art thou now, and wilt be henceforth. It will not be more noisome than it was, but the heat of the difficulty will remit by length of time and custom. Accustom thyself to do well, and thou wilt forget to do ill. Custom overcomes difficulty, because it overcomes nature, and what then will grace do? If custom overcome nature, much more will a well-ordered charity in thee overcome the deordinations of nature.

It is better many times to fulfil a good purpose, to consummate a work already begun, than to begin another, though otherwise more perfect; because by inuring thyself and yielding to a fickleness of mind, neither wilt thou perform that other. Seldom can any work occur, which is better than constancy in fulfilling a good purpose. Good purposes are to be kept, although they be not of any great regard; because albeit in themselves it imports but little whether they be kept or no, yet it is extremely important to be constant and no ways changeable. Who is more constant in making good purposes, than he who least intends to keep them. If thou learnest a firm perseverance in one good against another, thou wilt learn it more firmly against evil, and wilt not vary like time in this time of serving God. O Eternal Truth, grant me grace to serve

Thee eternally. Help, O Christ, my weakness, Thou Who with such indefatigable love tookest upon Thee all our infirmities; Thou, Who never art weary with tolerating my impudent negligences, grant that I may never be negligent any more, nor desist impudently from Thy service, but may learn to brook and swallow all morsels of difficulty. Let me learn, O Lord, perseverance by Thy love, Who when Thou lovedst Thine, Thou didst love them even to the end; Thou Who didst persevere hanging upon the Cross, and wouldst not desert it, though the Jews promised upon that condition to believe in Thee the Son of God; Who being full of irksomeness, anguish, and a bloody sweat, didst persist nevertheless, and seek redress by redoubling thy prayers.

Go to! O remiss spirit, tell me, what must thou covet to do for thy Jesus, Who persevered for thee amidst the sorrows of death and the Cross? Who when He loved thee, loved thee even to death; what, I say, must thou covet, but to do good and suffer evil. These are the chief ambition of a soul that loves Jesus, that which makes most for perseverance. A good work presents itself, what hinders thee from doing it, but the trouble which accompanies it? But mark well that here concurs a second commodity of suffering evil, and attend now that the good is doubled; there is superadded to this work, both to suffer evil and do good. Thou canst pretend no excuse for thy non-perseverance, because that only hinders thee which ought to be the sum of thy desire, to suffer for thy Beloved. If the love of Jesus were enkindled in thee, all backwardness, tribulation, and extrinsical impediments would no more oppress thee than fire is with wood, which forthwith more inflames it. But if thou be

so coldly chill, that the love of God finds no fuel to feed on, let thy own advantage and hope of future joy incite thee. Despair of coming off with life is wont to add valour to soldiers. and make them a way through the thickest dangers: Divine hope of eternal life is yet more forcible, and will make thee more valiant and daring. With this hope attempt thy enterprises, and persevere cheerfully. A cheerful acceptance feels neither labours nor trouble, though otherwise the thing be laborious enough. He that exerciseth himself in military games, or at ball, is wont to take more pains than one that hires himself forth to day-task, and yet he feels it not, because he takes it by way of pleasure and content.

If thou wilt conclude happily in the last hour, be sure to begin each hour; if thou intend to persevere, begin always anew. Excuse not thy negligence by indisposition of body: self-love for the most part deceives thee, and makes thee do thy actions remissly. Thy body is able to do more than thou thinkest, if thy fervour of mind were but vigorous, its force infusing strength even into weak and feeble limbs. A lunatic person though exhausted with sickness can do more than four that are sound. The vigour of our mind sometimes communicates itself to the body. If the infirmity of a malady can make one strong, how much more the strength of grace and health of soul, when he loves God and confides in Him.

CHAPTER XLVII.

How solicitous we must be to increase grace.

Go to the covetous man, O remiss spirit, and learn solicitude and acts of industry. No great matter is demanded of thee, if to become the best, thou be set to imitate the worst. No greater diligence is exacted of thee to please God, than many use to please nobody, yea, to displease all. Be confounded not to do for the Kingdom of Heaven, what is ordinarily done for a trifle of money. No more is required of thee to obtain great grace and glory, than the sinner of his own accord undergoes for vice and Hell. Thou mayest with credit be covetous of grace, and canst not be too minutely attentive in improving thy spiritual stock. Studious habits incline to action; for which reason it is proper to virtue to reflect not what is done, but what is to be done; not what is acquired, but what is behind: and therefore it never is in a stable possession, but always in pursuit and solicitude. It delights not in things past, but takes incentives from things to come. It is covetous, it thirsts, it burns, seeming still to itself more indigent, the more it gets.

Those that hunger after temporal things incur the hatred of all men, because they are profitable neither to themselves nor others. Yea, they en-

damage others either by usurping, or hindering, or denying them transitory goods, and depriving themselves of eternal. Contrariwise, those that hoard up spiritual treasures are deemed harmless, they are in the favour and esteem of all, because they enrich themselves without the prejudice of another. True goods are of this nature, that they are able to satisfy all parties without fear of consuming, or causing impeachment to another's wealth. In spiritual goods avarice is commendable, in temporal it is detestable; for the first are to be hoarded up, the latter to be distributed abroad, otherwise they are not goods, unless they be employed after a good manner; but spiritual avail not unless they be conserved, yet nevertheless they are not diminished but rather augmented by communication. Disdain not then to do that with credit and profit, which others forbear with the general dislike and disadvantage both of themselves and all. The miser prizeth one halfpenny as dearly as his life, and if he chance to lose it, he takes on pitifully: and so must thou, if through thy negligence thou sustain any detriment of grace, or slip any opportunity of improving it. The covetous rack their brains to invent new ways of gain, and thou must employ thy wits in devising how to advance in grace. Esteem nothing little, but have a most high conceit of all that stands in the rank of heavenly goods. Even as reason corrects the eye judging the stars to be as little as they seem, and convinceth it that each of them is much greater than the whole globe of the earth; so must thou rectify thy dictamens in a false estimate of these things, and persuade thyself that the least improvement of grace is more valuable than the sovereignty of the whole world. Let thy eye-lids always precede thy steps, that thou mayest be able to distinguish

and pick up the little margarites of merits amidst the dung of human employments.

Let this be thy chief care, next to good works, in the frequent and fervent use of the Sacraments. O immense liberality of God, which hast left those immense treasures of Thy Church unlocked, that every one might take as much as he listed. Let us rate the treasures of the Sacraments duly, and let the appetite of our avarice discharge and disburden itself upon them, for they are the mines of grace. A miser that loseth whole nights' sleep for a trifle of money, that sets so many engines at work for that end, that puts himself upon the tenter-hooks of a carking pain, if he should see the exchequer of a most wealthy King standing open, and the King himself begging of him to take thence as much and as often as he would, and should still importune him to carry away more and more, would he let slip this fair opportunity of enriching himself? This is Christ's proceeding with thee, in the institution of the Sacraments. Thou must not only dispose thyself in such sort as not to be frustrated of their effect, but thou must love them, and frequent them often, and dispose thyself worthily to receive more copious grace. Disposition is the vessel that receives it, and the greater that is, and the more ardent thy affection, the larger portion shall befall thee; the least grain whereof is more to be valued than all kingdoms and nature's universe. The Blood of Christ distils into these vessels as did the oil from the widow's oil-pot; neither will it stop its current till they be fully replenished.

Use also this little craft in thy holy avarice, and procure by all thy works to gain, if thou canst, a double grace; offering them to beg a worthy access to the Sacraments, and by so doing thou shalt both

receive grace or the merit of thy work, and thou mayest hope to receive yet another in regard of thy better disposition, which God will give, beholding thy affection and solicitude for a good preparation. Beg likewise of thy ghostly father, that all thy works may be enjoined thee for satisfaction of thy sins. Be also devoutly affected towards all the Sacrifices of Christ's sacred Body and Blood, that are offered through the whole world, coveting if it were possible to be present at them all; however, offer them up to God; being thus disposed thou shalt reap more ample fruit. Carry also a semblable devotion to all the general prayers of the Church for her children, as also to those of the faithful, that being thus piously disposed thou mayest partake more plentifully of them. Yea, he that is in mortal sin, which cannot be thought on without horror, must not omit to do all this, in token of the reverence he carries to a worthy reception of the Sacraments, with a good purpose and earnest desire of confessing his sins. By this means his good works, which otherwise are barren of grace in respect of merit, will afterwards in some manner be fruitful in the Sacrament, by reason of the disposition to which they conduce; for although grace shall not be given for their regard, yet it will for the good disposal which he may hope for by so diligent a preparation. This sore being thus cured, covet also to dispose thyself worthily towards the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, that thou mayest have it in store when thou shalt chance to stand in need of being aneled.

The servant of God must be attentive over such small niceties, and not permit one crumb of grace to fall which he may save; and using this industry all his life long, he shall gather a vast treasure.

Neither must he suffer that instrument of gain, a desirous will, to lie idle; let him be desirous to do, what he is not able to execute. Let him be most wealthy in good desires. When he sees, hears, or reads any signal act of virtue, let him wish to have enterprized it; let him burn with a holy and emulous envy; perchance he shall obtain like grace. To approve sin is the self-same as to commit it; in like manner, to desire earnestly an act of virtue will not want its due reward. God is more facile and forward in rewarding than punishing. The covetous man leaves nothing which he compriseth not in desire, although that make only for his greater torment. What would he do, if no sooner desired but forthwith possessed? This felicity and facility of usury is only to be found in a holy and spiritual avarice. Desires will not prove a torment to the servant of God, but a fruit and comfort: he shall presently be made partaker of like merit. Let us covet eternal goods with advantage, since worldlings covet temporal with grief and disappointment. How easy a gain is it which is purchased at the cost of a sole desire! Consider the ample revenue of desire, and how rich thou mayest be by only willing, and suffer not that which yields such a plentiful incoming to lie vacant. Be upon all occasions wishing to have not only the actual, but even possible merits, of all the Angels and Saints in Heaven, so to be more pleasing to God, and thou shalt reap a most rich harvest from the labours and services of others. Wish likewise to thy utmost power, and unfeignedly, to suffer what is possible for a creature to endure. And since all the voluntary actions thou canst do for Him, considering the excess of thy obligation, are but very few, glean here and there some more, and make advantage

even of thy necessary works, seating, sleeping and the like; and of them also make an oblation. Procure moreover to elevate works, of themselves but inconsiderable, to the highest pitch of virtue, and by so doing thou shalt acquire more copious grace. Do all what thou dost for the love of God. What greater felicity imaginable than, together with so great gain, not to be separated from Him Whom thou covetest, and oughtest to covet above all. Be ambitious of the advance of grace and use of the Sacraments, that thou mayest be more pleasing to God, more comely and gracious in His eyes. Neither must thou be more solicitous to increase grace, than fearful to lose it through idleness, by light defects and laziness. Unite all thy works and labours and offer them jointly with those of Christ, for so they will deserve a more gracious regard at the hands of God. Money which is less current, being mixed with store of current, passeth for such and receives its full value. A drop of water, falling into a vessel of wine, puts on the nature and relish of wine. And to the end thou mayest serve God in all cleanness of heart, be devoutly affected towards Indulgences. Purpose daily at thy rising to gain them all, and to use for that end thy utmost endeavour. Offer and consecrate them to God, having first dedicated thyself and all that is thine to His sole glory, and thou must reiterate this thy intention frequently through the day. If thou considerest what He is towards thee, and what in Himself, thou wilt find that thou hast not as yet given Him a satisfactory discharge of thy obligations.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

How God is to be praised.

If he be accursed that doth any work relating to God negligently, what will he be that praiseth him negligently? And such is he who performs this task of the Divine praises, wherein God's business is chiefly concerned, with slothfulness and impudency. Men are wont to be a little troubled, out of a reverential respect, if they be to speak to the King in their own behalf, and shall we be more sluggish and disrespectful in the King's own concern, He Himself being both spectator and auditor? Deservedly shall he be accursed who praiseth not God with such diligence as beseems Him. Behold the Angels and all creatures busied in praising and honouring their Lord and Creator, be thou ashamed by sloth, silence, or sinfulness to contemn Him. How absurd and extravagant a palate hath he, that is always disliking what all the world besides extols and magnifies? O Lord, let not me, by my distractedness and negligence, make my prayers and Thy praises evil and sinful, all evils being to be redressed by them. How can I find any place for distractions, since it behoves me to make amends in this hour for the distractedness of so many men, who scarce lend Thee a good thought? With what respect must I behave myself, since thou wilt have me supply for all sinners that dishonour Thee,

for all infants that are ignorant of Thee, and all creatures that are speechless? But why, O Lord dost Thou so much esteem the praises of so vile a miscreant? Is the master of a family any whit more glorious, for being praised by his children or meanest servants? That may be so, because they show the content they find in his service and house, where all from the highest to the lowest are extremely pleased with such a master. It was David's glory that his victory was celebrated not only by his courtiers, but handmaids also. God is glorified by being praised by His Angels whom He glorifies; and sometimes much more by men, whom He humbles and mortifies. How good indeed art Thou, O Lord, that even those, to whom Thou showest Thyself harsh and bitter, are loud proclaimers of Thy goodness! Each day will I magnify Thee, and in all seasons promiscuously, without distinction of day, of joy, or affliction.

Learn, O man, how acceptable it is to God to be truly praised and with desert, by that joy thou thyself conceivest when thou art praised falsely and without desert. It is much alike to praise God, as if thou gavest Him His Divinity. God is wont to accept the affection in lieu of the effect, when this implies an impossibility. He takes so much content in having a holy soul gaze upon Him, that He begs of her to look another way, because her eyes make Him as it were proud, and force Him to withdraw His presence. But how much more will she afford Him, when she stands admiring His perfections as one absorbed, seeking access by love-songs, and panegyrics full of sweet affection? We offend Thee, O Lord, by our tongue as a universe of iniquity: let me purge and reform it by the universe of Thy goodness and attributes. Let me wipe off

that infamous stain of man's tongue which cried Thee to the Cross, and let me extol Thee above Cherubim and Seraphim. Thou didst lose, O Lord, many Angels whose sole employment was to praise Thee. I am bound to give Thee many thanks for choosing me, a poor miscreant, to supply some one of their places, even among the blasphemies of those that offend Thee. Oh, how grateful is to Thee the praise of a pious soul, amidst the curses of so many infidels, as if one should hear a nightingale warble amidst a confused choir of chattering sparrows. Thou demandest, O Lord, that Thy voice may sound in my ears: how can I deny my voice to God speaking to me, and giving His Word, O immense Father, Who gavest me Thy Son, Thy Word, to be a revilement to all for my sake, all my words are due to Thee, that Thou mayest be praised in all by me. By Thy word Thou gavest all things their being; it is but equitable that by words at least we acknowledge and be grateful for what Thy word did.

If I were a labouring beast I would carry a burden; if a fat beast I would go to the shambles; if an ox I would stoop to the yoke—I would comply with the duty of all these—but because I am a rational creature, I will do what is proper to me, that is praise God. This is man's duty, this is the task of a reasonable soul, the song that it must sing, and I will invite all creatures on all occasions to join in choir with me. My task is not a task of burden and labour, but of tongue and song, of that which lessens and easeth labour. Husbandmen and artificers are wont to sing, so to mitigate the irksomeness of their work; why am I negligent in a thing so easy and delightful?

If I were a nightingale I would take pleasure in

singing, and do my duty. I am a man, why shall not I take pleasure in magnifying God, complying in this with my nature? I will practise myself here, in the school of human miseries, in this exercise of the blessed Angels, which must be my task for all eternity; and now, as it were by way of trial, I am to show how I will act my part in that scene of glory. I will intrude myself into the choirs of Angels, that the jarring discords of my song may be drowned in the melodiousness of their harnony. If Angels have been seen to consort with men, while they religiously sing in the choir, I will consort myself with the choirs of Angels, and imagine myself present there while I sing Divine praises; or among the Disciples and Christ, when having supped they recited a hymn of thanksgiving. O most sweet Jesus, who will be able to imitate the affection with which Thou saidst or sangest that hymn? It was equivalent to that, though it showed not itself exteriorly, which Thou shortly after didst exhibit in Thy bloody sweat, when Thou stoodest in need of an Angel to comfort Thee, either by praising Thee or compassionating Thy case. Grant, O Lord, that I may laudably perform the office of an Angel by praising Thee laudably. Grant, O Lord, that in memory of Thy Passion, I may at all times compassionate and comfort Thee. But Thou much more covetest this small solace of Thy affliction, to see me attentive, humble, and fervently zealous in discharging Thy praises, chiefly in the Divine Office, that I do it not with precipitation, but at a fit and seasonable hour.

We must be always praising and magnifying Thy holy Name at all times. What is the reason that no convenient time is allotted to that, which requires all time? All things have their season; only prayer

and praising Thee, which should have most, are wont to find none at all. Because the Divine Office is recited in private, that must not be a pretence to perform it more remissly or negligently. But thou must endeavour, by a devout observance, to supply the fruit which redounds from prayer in common or public, in such sort that thy very reverence may attractively invite thither the Angels, as did that devout servant of God, John Fernandius, a Father of our Society, who by a special favour from Heaven said Divine Office with an Angel. Do thou at least imagine one to be present and recite with thee, that thou mayest learn reverence of him, and how thou art to discharge that obligation both worthily and profitably.

O soul, how useless art thou to God whilst neither His praise nor glory possesseth thy heart nor mouth! He denies himself to be the work of God who neglects to praise God, to Whom each creature is barren that yields not this harvest of praise. Divine praise and glory is the fruit of man. God can, or rather deigns to, reap this increase and advantage of His benefits from His creatures. O immense Goodness to be magnified by all! If Thy creature owe Thee praise, because he is the work of thy hands, how much will he owe Thee because Thou praisedst him first? Thou createdst all things, O Lord, as well as praisedst them by approving them as good, and giving them Thy blessing: why shall not I bless Thee, and announce and see how good Thou art? How great a dignity is it, O man, that God should covet thy approbation and praise! Thou must praise Him with as much seriousness, as if all His reputation depended upon thy praise and approbation. Procure to be good and just, for praise from the unjust is held by wise men dispraise,

and they account it the same to be praised by the lecherous and for lechery. One had good reason to say, that our credit was less beholding to a slack and faint praiser, than to a bitter detractor. May it not happen now and then, that a blind, ignorant, and blasphemous heathen may less obstruct the exaltation of Christ and glory of God, than some religious man who performs his duties of devotion with drowsiness, immodesty, distraction, and irreverence. A frigid commendation is esteemed among men no better than a plain reproach, and perchance such an irreverent manner of praising God may sometimes be held next to blasphemy.

The first inventor of praise was God, and the first doctrine He taught me was to praise Him. The first benefit He bestowed upon creatures in their infancy, was praise and commendation of their goodness. Oh, the dignity of praise which God alone was worthy to invent! He would have other inventions to be ascribed to man, but He Himself would own that of praise. Thou didst not only create us, but also indoctrinate and instruct us in our duty, which is to praise Thy works, and Thee in them. A tender-hearted parent doth not content himself to have begotten his child, but he moreover provides carefully for his education. Thou, O Lord, didst praise Thy creatures as soon as Thou hadst made them; and because they cannot retaliate praise to Thee, as being dumb, they imposed this burden upon me for the services they do me, to praise Thee in lieu of them: they demand no other salary of me for their obsequiousness, than that I with my tongue supply for their dumbness. My praise is the praise of the elements and heavens, as when one is thankful to a benefactor in an infant's behalf, the acknowledgement is attributed

to the infant. Thou, O Lord, requirest my praise as a reward of Thy works: let me not be so unjust as to defraud Thee of so just a demand. Achieve, O Lord, great things and wonderful, and I, though ill-versed, will be careful to celebrate them. Be thou, O Lord, exalted in Thy virtue, and we will sing and solemnize Thy virtues.

CHAPTER XLIX.

How great a dignity it is to offer the sacrifice of Christ.

The chief glory of the servants of God is to imitate Christ, how glorious then will it be for a Priest to be equal with Him? It is a matter of great joy to suffer for God, but how great would it be to die in lieu of God? Oh, what an inestimable favour would it have been judged, if when Christ crowned with thorns, steeped in His own sweat and Blood, laden with His Cross, pinioned with cords, exhausted in His strength, through weight of the tree and feebleness caused by the foregoing torments, fell to the ground, if, I say, thou hadst then heard the voice of His Father speaking from Heaven, most lovingly to thee in these words: My will is that thou die for mankind, in place of My Only-begotten Son, and accomplish the work for which I designed My Own Beloved Child. Oh, the desire of my heart, how come I to be worthy of this? Who would confer such a blessing upon me, which I am much more ambitious of, than to be in present possession of glory? How unspeakable a courtesy should I repute it, if I were thought worthy only to help Thee

with the Cyrenæan in carrying Thy Cross? I would esteem it an immense favour to receive but one stripe for Thy sake. What would it be to carry Thy whole Cross, and put thyself in lieu of Thee to be crucified? Melting into tears out of mere joy, I would go to my Jesus and demand of Him His crown of thorns, and would press it feelingly upon my temples; I would demand His cords, and would pinion myself with them; I would demand His Cross, and load myself with it, marching under that standard to the Mount of Calvary. Oh, how all the Angels, and the very Queen of Angels herself, would envy my happiness, how the heavenly spirits would environ, accompany, and reverence me for this work of redemption! If this honour were granted to St. Michael, the Prince of Angels, to suffer in place of Christ our Lord, with what fervour would he accept the very pains of hell, and burning with a zeal of God's glory, would cry out with greater ardour than before, "Who is like to God?" The rest of the Angels would esteem it the greatest glory that could befall their nature, and would attend upon that vicegerent of Christ. A much greater favour and more special grace is granted to a Priest.

Consider in the meantime when thou comest to sacrifice, that thou receivest a precept from the Eternal Father to be Christ's substitute in order to dying. When thou puttest on the sacred vestments, thou dost nothing else but transplant the crown of thorns from Christ's upon thy own head, put on His garment, bind thyself with His cords, and carry His Cross. Consider what thou goest to do, and take those sacred ornaments, as if thou receivedst from Christ's hands the ensigns of His Passion, which He preferred much before the

heavens thou contemplatest. Now when the Priest comes forth thus vested, what a train of Angels doth attend Him! If fewer had been created than *de facto* are, persuade thyself that they would sooner have left Heaven vacant, and the guardianship of men, than the attendance and assistance of him that celebrates. When a King deputes a viceroy, or sends an ambassador, about his affairs or public concernments, all the peers and nobles accompany him, though for that interim they relinquish both King and Court. Such a concourse make the Angels to honour and assist Christ's deputy; and they are the more forward since by so doing they honour the Person itself of their King and Lord of Glory, Who becomes after a wonderful manner present in the Mass. With what humility and modesty ought a Priest to approach the altar! But now, when the time of sacrifice is at hand, let him redouble his wishes of dying in lieu of Christ, for the ransom of all mankind. He may contemplate the whole world hanging in a deep suspense, the doleful cries of the souls in Purgatory, the endless sins of men, the innumerable dangers of the just, the necessities of the distressed, the inflamed desires of the Blessed, the profuse joy of the Angels, and all these contemplating his sacrifice. And the Priest then knowing that his own death cannot be satisfactory for all, let him rejoice exceedingly that Christ is again allotted for the sacrifice, He Who alone was able to make full satisfactory amends; as also for that God, accepting of the Priest's good will, as He did formerly of that of Abraham and Isaac, would again substitute for victim an innocent ram, and Lamb Who takes away the sins of the world, One that will abundantly satisfy for all, freeing the Priest from becoming an oblation or

being immolated, but conferring never[illegible] him the honour and dignity of so great a [illegible] and embassy. The victim, that is to be offered for the sins of the world, must be without blemish of sin. But because none but Christ is so qualified, it was requisite that that High-Priest and Prelate should offer Himself, He Who needs not make an oblation first for His own misdemeanours, and then for those of the people.

I see not, O Priest, vicegerent of Christ, how thou canst choose here but melt and evaporate away, through an excess of joy and love. If any one did lie in prison, as being liable to some great crime or debt, which he were not able to clear or cancel, and another should come and as bountifully, as unexpectedly, bestow upon him what were requisite for a full discharge, how would he be overwhelmed with joy? Behold thou art wholly incapable of making God any proportionable satisfaction, either for His favours or thy own fault, thou being infinitely obliged to Him upon so many other scores, and hopeless of thyself ever to quit them; and if thou lovest God after a sincere manner, this ought to be an afflicting corrosive to thy heart. What jubilee must needs seize thee when Christ comes into thy hands, and makes Himself thy oblation to His Father for a plenary satisfaction? Certainly he that loves God ought both day and night to be in expectation of this hour, wherein poor miscreant man offers to an infinite God, that which will be infinitely pleasing to Him, insomuch that he needs not now dread the debt of his own sins, as not having wherewith to discharge it. Pay Thyself, O Lord, for my sins, and restore to me what is overplus and I shall be rich enough, the residue amounting to an infinitude. I offer more-

...to Thee in all their behalf, for whom ...rist offered Himself upon the Cross for Thy glory, for Thy mercies imparted to the whole world, for the coming of the Holy Ghost, that He may breathe upon my soul and inflame it with His lightsome ardours.

But with how great charity and obedience must I make this oblation of Christ? With so much greater than Abraham did, when he was to sacrifice his dearest son, by how much Christ exceeds Isaac, and the common cause of all mankind, the particular of one single man. If God should have commanded the most Blessed Virgin, as He did Abraham, to sacrifice for man's redemption her only and dearly beloved Son, and she, full of motherly affection, were to nail His hands and feet to the Cross, with what vehement flames of love amidst a torrent of tears, with what quickness, promptitude, and obedience would she have done it, deeming herself happy by such a task? O Priest, consider what an office is deputed to thee, that thou thyself art the sacrificer of the Son of the Virgin, the Son of God. But a greater favour is done to thee, than would be done in that case to the most holy Mother of God; for thou never canst thank God sufficiently, for inventing a means how thou mightest sacrifice the Son of God, without any pain to Him, without expense of blood or the torments of death, and mayest offer all the pains of Jesus, all His blood and deadly pangs to His Father, in the self-same manner as if they were here really exhibited.

Stand amazed, O Priest, at thy function. Behold the world all in suspense over thee! How dreadful is it to see thee stand void of all attention, where thou shouldst be replenished with an awful veneration, and immersed in the dregs of creatures, while

thou performest an office next in dignity to the Divinity itself? When thou elevatest the Body of Christ, thou drawest all the Saints to such a spectacle, and engagest (as I conceive) the eyes and knees of the admiring Angels; and yet for all this canst thou be distracted? The very dead themselves adore God in thy hands, as a devout servant of God, Father Peter Savedra, beheld the body of St. Didacus to arise and worship Christ in the hands of the Priest. And canst thou thyself, who elevatest Him, be in the meantime unmindful of so redoubted a Majesty, and not reverence Him from the depth of thy heart? Contemplate round about thee the hierarchies of Angels with bended knees, and multitudes of devils forced to a humble acknowledgment; for if each knee both celestial, terrestial, and infernal, bend at the name of Jesus, how much more will they at the presence of Jesus?

Consider how signal thy purity ought to be, who art appointed Christ's substitute to cleanse the world by Him from its sinful ordures. Thou shouldst not appear like a man, but a very Angel, and shine more purely than the heavens themselves. What do I say? Oh, how mean and disproportioned is the comparison of an Angel to a Priest! Since the power of priestly dignity is higher exalted above the prerogatives of a nature angelical, than is an Angel in its kind above a worm. God, Who is so profusely good, was pleased to honour His creatures by calling them into part of His charge and providence. He designed the Angels chiefly for His coadjutors and vicegerents in natural things, and therefore made them public ministers of nature, not dispensers of grace and His substitutes in the work of our redemption. They preside over the

parts of the earth, and chief quarters of the world. It is their task to conserve the kinds and natures of things; but as for producing in others the supernatural gift of grace, they have no lawful, nay, nor any ordinary authority, as Priests have, whom He chose for His immediate coadjutors in the stupendous work of our redemption and justification. They, as the vicars of Christ, dispense forth grace and make men the children of God. They exercise a kind of power over the natural Son of God Himself, Jesus, while they consecrate His Body and offer sacrifice. They work prodigious miracles. The Angels take complacence in serving a Priest, as they did St. Eusebius, esteeming the service a high place of honour. How much is grace elevated above nature? Certainly more sublimely, without comparison, than the nature of an Angel is above dung. How much will guarding a man fall short of making a man God, by elevating him to a Divine state. Which is more honourable, to have a care of one or of all; to provide for one or all; to govern some particulars or appease God for the generality? Thou mayest hence conclude how eminently a Priest is privileged in power above an Angel. The sole dignity of Christ is only worthy of Priesthood. Jesus alone, as being the first-begotten of God, obtains by title of right a dignifying dignity. Notwithstanding this, O Mary, most loving Mother, Mother of Christ and all sinners, clothe me in the garments of Thy first-begotten by a perfect imitation of life, as Rebecca did Jacob, that I may at least with less unworthiness offer that Lamb to His Eternal Father, which Thou gavest me for a delicious dish, on which Thou knowest Him to feed with much gust and appetite.

CHAPTER L.

That God is to be desired and received with longing in the Eucharist.

O Desirable Truth, what do I hear from Thy mouth, the oracle of all truth?—With a desire have I desired to eat with you this Pasch. How comes it to pass that a man of desires obtains of God whatsoever he covets, and the God of desires cannot obtain of miscreant man His just demands? The abstemious Daniel obtained grace of God by desiring; and Thou, O Lord, the replenisher of souls and divider of the Bread of Heaven, shalt not Thou prevail so far with me by so many desires and engines of love, as to make me yield up the citadel of my heart to Thee, Who seekest entrance by so many stratagems and services? O languid spirit, what canst thou desire but what God desires desiringly? But what, O Lord, desirest Thou by entering into my body? Dost Thou covet to become identified with me, whilst Thou covetest to be united to me? What object, suitable to the greatness of Thy Majesty, canst Thou desire besides Thyself? Thou covetest, O Lord, to be with me, but after such a manner that I may be transformed into Thee, becoming one body or con-corporeal with Thee, as the members are with their head; as also one spirit, adhering to God that He may be with me and I with Him. Charity used a strange disposal,

when it ordained that I should be Thy mansion-house and Thou shouldst remain in me and I in Thee; I living for Thee as Thou for Thy Father; Thou desiring nothing of me nor for me, besides Thyself; nor ceasest Thou to covet me upon so due a score or just pretence, though prescinding from Thyself Thon findest nothing in me desirable.

Come, O Lord, come and take possession of my heart, which Thy desires most justly challenge. Oh, how much do I betray my nothing, nòr can I resist this claim of desires! Was it not sufficient, O beneficent Truth, to have obliged me with deeds and gifts; why was it necessary to engage me with Thy desires? My miseries have bereaved me of all comfort; for seeing my works to carry but small proportion with Thy benefits, it was some relief to endeavour satisfaction by wishes and desires: but they also becoming due to Thee, what now is remnant? O Lord, how worthily art Thou the butt of all desires, Who desired so desiringly! How can I have leisure to fix my desires upon anything else besides Thee, the God of desire? How can my thoughts or concupiscible powers suspend themselves from the desire of Thy most holy Body, where the whole man becomes Christ? In other Sacraments and participations of grace he is made one spirit with God; but in this, he moreover becomes one flesh with Jesus, such a strict union interceding, that it is termed by the Holy Fathers substantial, natural, and real; insomuch that now I am wholly Thine and one with Thee, and regard and reverence myself as flesh, partaking of Thy flesh, which the most Blessed Virgin handled and worshipped with so much devotion; being jointly two in one flesh, I being able to glory and say, I am now flesh of Christ, and a bone of the

bones of Jesus. This is a great Sacrament in Christ and His Church, by that mystery in which we become concorporeal with the King of Glory, the Son of God and of the Virgin Mary. Now loving Thee, O Lord, I will love myself, for nobody ever hated his own flesh; and thou loving Thy flesh, lovedst me also, making both Thine and mine joint-sharers of the same favours, treating mine as Thy own by the privilege of the resurrection. For although other just men, both ancient Prophets and Patriarchs, were not to enjoy a resurrection, yet those should who die partakers of this Sacrament of our Lord's Body; neither shall this befall them only in regard of the merits of their soul, but also for the dignity of their flesh. O Lord, Thou wast desired by all nations, that common nature might share of Thy communications. Why do not I desire Thee, that Thou mayest become individual to me and one with me, by that admirable inconfused conjunction with my particular flesh and spirit?

Therefore, O Lord, because we do not desire as we ought, Thou didst vouchsafe to do it, lest so great a benefit should be deprived of its due love and esteem. Thou causedst other blessings to be sought and chiefly that of the Incarnation; but Thou wouldst have the institution of the venerable mystery of Thy Body and Blood to come merely gratis, without the expense of the desires of all nations. That Sacrament came as an unexpected boon and unlooked-for charity, that all our desires might be reserved and employed in a due reception of it, and yet for all this we are not inflamed! A desire of this mystery is so acceptable to Thee, that Thou wonderfully secondest it, and condescendest to a soul that longs to receive Thee. Blessed Stanislaus, a novice of our Society, being

more than once in such a condition that he could not satiate his longing desire, by feeding on this Celestial Bread, with much ardour of devotion desired what he could not then enjoy, and forthwith the Angels brought what he desired, and made him eat of that sacred banquet. Because the Body of Christ is seldom received with a due desire, God would not let this occasion of a worthy reception slip, or frustrate it, beholding that blessed soul in such a spiritual famine and eagerness of appetite.

Thou taughtest us, O Jesus, Teacher of all Truth, to come to this Sacrament with much tenderness of devotion. But we do not imitate the devotion Thou exhibitedst towards it, by desiring. I know not how we can, if we love Christ, behold this mystery without weeping eyes, for a spouse cannot behold the pledge which her fellow-spouse, bidding adieu towards a long journey, left her for a memorial, without a longing desire of his return. We must not only endeavour to receive it worthily, but even as worthily as possibly we can. For besides that an infinite Majesty requires all possible reverence, and the immense sanctity of Jesus all purity imaginable, we shall derive thence a great increase of grace. Thou gavest us, O Lord, three documents to make us approach it with greater worthiness—a fervent love in desiring, an exquisite purity, a profound humility, which Thou didst exhibit in washing the feet of Thy Disciples. What shall I say of purity? Thou oughtest, O lover of Christ, in thy access to this table, to possess it in such eminency, that its beams must be no less refined than if thou wert presently to give up the ghost. Thou must endeavour with more earnestness, desire, and solicitude to prepare thyself for the Eucharist than for death; nay, in some respect of profit, more

than if thou wert about to enter into the glory of God. Jesus washed the feet of His Disciples, being to impart His Body to them, although they were already clean; and, notwithstanding, when He sent them like lambs in the midst of wolves, in such a present hazard of death, and when He took them along with Him to Mount Tabor, as eye-witnesses of His glorious transfiguration, He used no such preparative; nor when in glory He eat with them after His resurrection. One would be pretty well disposed for death, if he were but in the state of grace; for although he were not altogether free from tax of pain or venial culpableness, yet before he stood in the presence of God he would be purified by cleansing flames. I wish with all my heart that a purgatory did precede the reception of this Sacrament! But because it doth not, it imports me to look most narrowly into myself, and prepare and refine myself from the least blemish of imperfection or debt of any penalty, and supply as well as I can by diligence and an ardent love the fire of Purgatory. And although all immunity both from pain and fault be requisite, to gain admittance into glory, nevertheless no respect is had but to precedent grace and works; neither is the divine indulgence doubled, in regard of the disposition as it is distinct from merit. But in the Eucharist a more ample claim and title to glory will be acquired, even in regard of each one's disposal, over and above that which is allotted to his merits. And he that makes it his task to till the soil of his soul and dispose it better and better, the richer crop shall he reap thence, besides the reward of his good works. One ought to be more ambitious of pleasing God and being more gracious in His eyes, which is the effect of greater grace, than of reposing in the

fruition of His glory, if the ampleness of beatitude were not commensurately corresponding to His grace and will. All mediums that dispose us to glory by good works, distinct from the Sacraments, obtain grace under one only title; but preparation for the Eucharist under a double, and gains afterwards a double degree of beatitude.

Purity is so beseemingly requisite in order to this Sacrament, that the Divine Providence hath ordained that the preceding sacrifice of Christ be propitiatory for our sins, it having virtue to remit the very pain due to their fault. Christ Himself Whom we receive is pleased first of all to cleanse us, as He did the feet of His disciples, ere He would give Himself to us or deliver Himself for us. He showed by that washing, that not any kind of purity was sufficient, but that a special one was necessary; for He would not only have the hands of His Disciples clean, which sufficeth for ordinary banquets, but their feet also, which signifies a very extraordinary diligence. God declared thereby that we are to come to the Eucharist not only with clean hands, that is, works devoid of all fault, but also with clean feet, that is to say, without so much as any print or sign of fault, namely, the pain due to tepid actions or sins remitted being quite abolished; and in this sort grace proper to this sacrifice is powerful to cancel the penalty due to sin.

How shall I come worthily, O Lord, to receive Thee? What a treasure of sanctity was bestowed upon St. John Baptist, that his mouth might figuratively entertain not Thee but Thy Name, saying, Behold the Lamb of God; and that he might express the shadow of one of Thy Sacraments? But what purity ought to invest me who am to approach that venerable Sacrament, and receive Thee truly and

really into my mouth? Oh, I wish I could entertain Thee with as much reverence, as the most Blessed Virgin Mother did in her sacred womb in that stupendous hour of Thy Incarnation; or as she embraced Thy most holy Body in her bosom, when it was taken down from the Cross, and Thy Heavenly Father received Thy Spirit at Thy expiring, when it was recommended into His hands. What Thou dividest, O Lord, in Thy death betwixt Thy Father and Mother, all that do I here adore in this Sacrament after Thy resurrection, for Thy Soul remains not separate from Thy Body. Thou affordest me that Body which Thou bequeathedst to Thy Mother, together with Thy Spirit which Thou recommendedst to Thy Father. Oh, that any one could have applied his mouth to that of the expiring Jesus, and gathered thence His sacred breath, worthy to be gathered by the hands of God, that it might animate and steer my body! Oh, that any one could, with the effusion of his own blood, wash the disfigured corpse of Jesus, and make himself the vial of Christ's blood shed for my sake, to cleanse my soul so ill-favoured and ugly! Oh, that any one would hold his mouth to receive and taste the water and blood which flowed from the side of Christ, that not so much as one drop of it might fall to waste! But Thou, O Lord, desirous and desirable, compliest with my wishes in this dreadful mystery. How great joy did the Angels conceive in Thy ascension, when Thou enteredst triumphant into Heaven, what longing desires preceded Thy return thither? Oh, the desired of all the hierarchies of heavenly spirits, with what jubilee of heart ought I to exult when Thou enterest into my breast.

I alone, upon many scores, owe Thee all the

reverence which all the Angels exhibited when they entertained Thee returning from this world and passible life, for Thou frequently enterest into me, that Thou mayest delight me alone, Thou Who once only entered into Heaven, to cause joy to all the Angels. Thou frequently dost for me alone, what Thou didst but once for all the choirs of blessed spirits. If this favour were imparted to one alone of all the multitudes of men, that once only through all eternity Christ should enter after this most amiable manner into his sole breast, what a stupendous benefit would it be deemed? Whosoever should hear of it, ravished into ecstacy with this excess of bounty, would scarce believe it. He that received Him, absorbed in admiration, would stand like one beside Himself, without voice, without motion, yea, without life, through amazement, fear, joy, and love, unless he were miraculously sustained, by reason of such unheard-of benevolence. Why then do not I worthily reverence and admire a greater benefit, conferred not once but often, not on me alone but all, wherein I acknowledge the favour done me much heightened. Oh, that I or any one could entertain Thee, O amiable Jesus, becoming my Guest, as Thy Father entertained Thee entering into Heaven, after a world of torments and death! For the sanctity of all the Angels, their devotion, their joy, pomp and celebrity, fell far short, I will not say of Thy majesty, but even of that humility wherewith Thou deignest to shut Thyself up in the narrow cottage of my heart. Grant me grace by so rare an example to humble myself below nothing. I that cannot humble myself sufficiently in respect of Thy humility, how can I do it in respect of Thy majesty and glory? Oh, how happy is that soul that shall humble itself before this

Sacrament, what honour will accrue to it! How will the Angels reverence and honour such a one, that it may receive its Lord with honour! St. Teresa oftener than once beheld the Brothers of our Society, when they went to communicate in our church, accompanied with Angels, and these holding a most rich and beautiful canopy over their heads, that like royal and consecrated souls they might more honourably entertain their Sovereign. But when others approached that Heavenly Table she beheld no such obsequiousness in these Blessed Spirits; and the reason was, want of humility in their devotions. Let us then procure with all humility, devotion, fervour and charity, to receive that supersubstantial daily bread. Let us so receive it daily, as if we were never more to receive it; though we come very frequently, let us come so as if it were to be but once in our whole life. Let our daily Communion be so performed as ought to be the first of our life and the last at the hour of our death.

CHAPTER LI.

That in time of refection we must not be more indulgent to our body than necessity requires.

The Angels expect thee at their supper, glut not thyself like a beast with corruptible food. He that is invited as a guest to another's table eats nothing at home: thou art invited a guest to Heaven, do not at least glut thyself upon earth. If one that is cloyed with earthly food cannot be a competent guest at an earthly banquet, how can he be at a heavenly one? Fulness hinders the relish of material meats, how much more then of Divine? The fasting Lazarus who could not so much as feed upon crumbs, is now a constant guest at the heavenly supper; but that glutton who crammed himself with exquisite dainties is shut forth. Men at a banquet abstain from several dishes, reserving their appetite for some choice one, intending to make their repast upon that. O Lord, if I shall be satiated at the appearance of Thy glory, I reserve myself for it, and will refrain from these grosser meats of the earth. Upon hopes to feed more savourly at a well-furnished table, the guest is content to protract his fast: it is but meet that upon hopes of the Divine supper we at least keep abstinence. Remember that Christ hath made thee equal with the Angels, and will it not then be a shame to do like a beast? He that cannot wholly

wipe off an infamy, lessens and dissembles it as much as he can; let it confound us to renew daily the brand we received by gluttony in our first fall from a state of happiness, and that with so much gust and savour. If we had Heaven either in esteem, or hunger, we should loathe earth and earthly things; in which, when we are to eat, for as much as concerns gust, we must carry ourselves as if there were none at all.

God Himself invites thee a guest to the supper of eternal glory: in the interim sitting down to table let Christ be thy fellow-guest, and thou wilt be abstemious, if thou suppose thou art to divide with Him. Whatsoever thou subtractest from thy necessary sustenance, offer it to Jesus. The Pharisees and Publicans invited Jesus: thou, being a Christian, must not think much to do the same. He that invites another, labours not so much to please his own palate as his guest's, for whom he carves the best piece: so when thou sittest down at table, strive not to content thy own relish, but study how to pleasure Christ, and the only way to pleasure His gust is to take no gust at all. Consider Him where He refreshed those three days, when His Mother lost Him in the Temple. Prepare a banquet for Him together with St. Matthew. Contemplate Christ and His Disciples when through want of necessaries they pulled ears of corn. Call Him, and, making Him share of thy provisions, prepare Him a feast together with Zacheus. Behold Him fasting forty days for thy sake, and if thou wilt not minister to Him with the Angels, invite Him with Simon, and He will be as much refreshed with thy abstinence, as if a table were furnished for Him by the Angels. He begged a draught of water from the Samaritan; do thou give

Him of thy cup. I thirst, cried He, from the Cross; let Him taste of thy chalice. Oh, that any one would give me gall and vinegar, and I would exchange cups with Christ, relieving His thirst with my drink! How could I choose but relieve Thee, O Lord, in such extreme necessity? Now I am able to do it, and undoubtedly Thou wilt relish my goodwill and desire of abstinence more savourly, than if I offered Thee a most delicious draught. How unnatural were he that would not relieve Thee? Now I may do it, if I drink not more than is necessary. Why shall I not refresh Thy thirst? Behold, O soul, thy Jesus desirous to eat this Pasch with us. Accompany the Apostles that thou mayest partake of so desired a table. Carry thyself there with modesty and humility. Seek the lowest place, but choose not for all that the place of Judas. Thou art not worthy to sit at such a table; place thyself at the feet of thy companion the betrayer; the most humble Jesus will even there also find thee out. Contemplate how He fed so many years with His most holy Mother and St. Joseph. She perchance sometimes eat very sparingly, and defrauded her own mouth of many bits purposely to give them to her most loving Son, their poverty not sufficing for both. Deprive thyself of some parcel and give it as an alms to the Virgin, wherewith to feed her dearest Child. Remember how this Mother of love gave suck to her Infant Jesus; how the Son of God even then would fast for thy sake, and abstain sometimes from these sweet breasts. Do thou also for His sake refrain at least from some particle, and offer it to Christ with a most ardent charity, with such, to wit, as she nursed Him: imitate to thy utmost her love. In this manner thou shalt stifle with pious meditations, and forestall thy appetite

by an affection to things Divine. One desire will drive out another, and one relish drown another. Perchance gluttony will be no less extirpated, and thy mind, by ruminating what is read at table, and such pious employments, more purged than by fasting itself.

If the motive of doing a thing acceptable to Christ do not urge thee, the dignity of abstinence, and the profit which redounds from it, ought in all reason to prevail. Nothing is more contrary to the spirit than an unmortified appetite. Eat to refresh thy body not to overcharge it. Many when they eat do rather oppress than nourish their bodies, making that which ought to be the refection of life its oppression. Is it not very absurd to load and stuff one's belly as one would do an ass' pack, since our flesh is elevated above the Cherubim? If the Kingdom of God and tabernacle of the Holy Ghost be within us, why are we so base-minded as to make our stomachs the charnel-house or sepulchre of dead beasts? He that ought to be the temple of the living God, called to a divine life, why doth he debase himself to the meanest of all lives, to wit, a dead life and the very dregs of all life? Plants having only a nutritive life, are void of all sense. We lose so much of our mind as we bestow it upon meat. What more unworthy than the loss of an angelical life and mind? If thou feedest too greedily and sensually, thou hast reason to fear lest thou degenerate not so much into a beast, as into a tree or stock. Adam, being overcome with gluttony, clad himself with leaves like a tree, as if he meant to become one, carrying its shape in his flight from God. Gluttony and nutrition is not only a life proper to unreasonable creatures, but to the very insensible plants, nutrition being only

peculiar to them. Therefore a full belly obstructs all sense, it evacuates the mind, it disposeth one to insensibility by hindering the use of reason, which after dinner is dull and sluggish ; it induceth sleep, in which a man differs nothing at all from an elm or plane-tree, save only that this at set times affords the benefit of a shade ; but the life of gormandizers is the life of sleepers, and the life of sleepers the life of a gourd, which is always in a lying posture. Hence it follows that he who is less abstemious is less obsequious to reason, as being more insensible. The sole life of trees is incapable of command. Nutrition itself is not in the power of a creature. When we check our desires, or curb savage beasts, they become tame and pliable to their keepers ; but plants which regard nothing as I may say but their belly, that is, to feed themselves, they hearken to nobody nor regard reason. This kind of life is the scum and refuse of all lives, and most remote from a soul endowed with reason ; how much more from a spirit which breathes God. A dog will hear his master's call, so will not an oak or fig-tree the husbandman's, nor he that over-feeds himself the voice of God. He to keep Adam to his duty enacted the first law of fasting, and the only one of that most happy state, so to recommend more earnestly to us the virtue of abstinence, as if it alone were sufficient to preserve innocency and other virtuous endowments, putting man in a fit disposition to hear and adhere to God. Our Lord would commit the tuition of His beloved child, Adam, and His Benjamin of creatures to no nurse but fasting, into whose faithful hands He intrusted him, that it might be the foster-father of man, and his instructor to obedience. But this precept being violated, Adam forthwith fled from the voice of

God, caring so little to adhere to Him, that he would not only not seek nor approach Him, but sought to avoid God, Who sought him. He renders himself wholly unfit for all, who is not abstemious. He will resist God's holy inspirations, and withdraw himself from His familiarity, being weaned as much from the divine breasts as he yields to these sensual appetites.

What commerce betwixt God and one's belly? How can God affect him who affects only his belly as his God? How canst thou endure O Divine Truth, to dwell in him who is such an arrant idolater? It was anciently held a high strain of folly for men to kneel by way of worship to those things that were the handiwork of men; and how fond a thing is it for thee, an intemperate man, to set thy heart upon that which thou destroyest, and will destroy thee, to wit, meat and its relish? How intendest thou to feast with God, to lead a celestial kind of life, to fly with Him upon the wings of the winds to immortality, if thou takest complacence in the life of those things which stick to the earth, and are rooted and half-buried in it? The life of self-pamperers is extremely mortal, for such is the life of plants, which are in part overwhelmed with earth. Those that feed their belly increase their mortality, by fattening what is mortal in them, becoming more mortal by hindering eternal life, by defiling their mind, and so contracting their soul as to render it only corporeal. Adam by breaking his fast became forthwith mortal: thou becomest every day more mortal by stuffing thyself with dead things and feeding greedily on slaughtered creatures, and seasoned for this end that they may be entombed in thee. But so much more happy shalt thou be, by how much thou partakest of immortality, and thou shalt partake so much the more of it, if thou inure

thyself to a spare diet and to feed on unsavoury meats. All our life in this world is bitter, full of labour and afflictions; wherefore it is impertinent to go about to repair and maintain it with sweet things. Eat only that thou mayest live: let thy meat be such as is the rest of thy life. Thou livest not to eat, but to die; and thou eatest that thou mayest not die quickly. Death assails him sooner that feeds too plentifully and delicately. Food must be the medicine of life, not its poison and destruction.

Let thy own hunger, and the gall and vinegar of Christ, be all thy sauce and seasoning, Who for that end drunk it upon the Cross, because whosoever combats against sin must not seek after savoury meats; and the adjoining of hyssop with a sponge signifies the virtue of cleansing, that we might have a model how to purge our souls. By frugality and untoothsome meat, the Divine character which is engraven in us becomes more resplendent, and the holy purity of our mind is refined, that it may be united to God, and made more capable of Divine impressions; for if fasting drive out the stubbornest devils from another's body, much more forcibly will it attract God, so facile and benign, into our own. If such be the virtue of fasting, that by it thou canst purify others, how much more will it sanctify thyself? He breathes something Divine who breathes abstinence and hunger; the body itself is in a certain manner elevated by the force of a disengaged spirit. Iron is ponderous, but it becomes light by the spirit and virtue of the loadstone; and if thou also fasten and hang thyself upon God, He will sublimate thy body by the vigour of thy spirit, rendering it intellectual and incorporeal. The composition also of thy body is rarified by abstinence, in such

sort that Divine irradiations penetrate more easily into the soul; and she will more dexterously steer it, when it is squared more fitly to her, by a due demolishment, as being disembarked of that fat rind that environed it; for a great weight is no ways wieldy or commodiously manageable.

Lastly, abstinence contains so great a good, that there is nothing to which it is not extreme beneficial. Other virtues adorn the soul, but abstinence is salutiferous both to body and soul. Both Saints and philosophers by embracing it protracted their life to a fair old age. We men, designed to be immortal, had contented ourselves in that most happy state of innocency to feed only upon herbs and the fruits of the earth; now temperance also restores to man that golden age. Spare diet conduceth to the health of the body, it is a natural restorative, a universal medicine fit to be applied to all kinds of diseases. The skilfulest physicians prescribe it for the first recipe in all maladies, for repletion is the metropolis or head-city of diseases, and death's chief sergeant. All the untimely deaths of young people are in a manner caused by excess in diet. But if frugality be effectual against all the indispositions of the body, it will also give redress to those of the soul. Hunger makes the proud to stoop, the covetous to disburse, the lazy and slothful it forceth to work; it renders the luxurious chaste, and the angry man calmly patient. If then frugality, even when it is forced, makes head against all vices; if when it is no virtue it can engender virtues, what remains, when it is a true and sincere one, but that it must needs associate God to a soul and make Him its constant sojourner. God took complacence in conversing with Moses and Elias when they were both in a long fast.

But after the same manner that fasting expels and puts the devils to flight, satiety bereaves us of God. Unless thou resolve to banish this vice, and establish in thy soul the virtue of temperance, thou mayest well despair of the rest. It will be the same as if one being desirous to beat away a troublesome dog should instead of a stone throw at him a crust of bread. A domestic enemy must first be vanquished, ere we can fall aboard with a foreign.

CHAPTER LII.

That one must take account of his proceedings by a frequent examen of himself.

Men do seldom cast a reflex eye back upon their life, and therefore frequently they find it very bad. For the most part they never deliberate about their actions. If now and then, at the most it is what they are to do, seldom what they have done; and yet they can scarce know how it is to be well done, unless they reflect what hath been amiss. Future gains arise from the consideration of losses by-past. Merchants sum up their day's traffic, and if they find themselves losers, they purpose to make it up another day by other advantages. Masters exact an account of their servants even to a minute business, and why is the soul of man, more precious than heaven and earth, slighted as a thing of no reckoning? In the expense of a three-penny matter they are precisely scrupulous, but can easily digest the loss of an eternal gain. The commonwealth without magistrates will become the mere sink of villany; a field untilled, a nursery of brambles.

The sin of Adam corrupted our heart more than it did the earth. If thou dost not cultivate thy conscience it will branch forth into innumerable vices.

Thou must, O remiss spirit, be unmerciful in exacting an account of thyself, that thou mayest deserve mercy at the hands of God. Many have run evident danger of miscarrying by reason of their hidden sins. The world is involved in darkness, thou will scarcely be able to know thyself, when thou searchest into thyself; how will the case stand, if thou search not at all? But if thou knowest not thyself, why art thou solicitous either to know or have anything else? For although thou possess the whole world, and be expert in all sciences, thou wilt both be a fool, and poor and despicable, because thou dost not possess thyself, who art better than all things, and by whom thou shalt have all; and not possessing thyself, thou wilt possess nothing, and thy knowledge will serve to no other purpose but make thee err and abuse creatures. The sole wise man is rich. Happy is he who is master of himself, acknowledging his own vileness, and makes that his search, and comes as it were to finger it. One loves to know the horse he is to ride on, one will have the number of his cattle and sheep, and is content to be only ignorant of himself, and sin without number. Why will man be such a great enemy to himself as not to regard himself? But if thou wilt hate thyself to thy advantage, do it, I pray, by abhorring thyself, not by forgetting. By looking into thyself thou wilt abhor thyself, by abhorring thyself thou wilt correct thyself, and, by correcting, be acceptable to God.

Although we will not examine ourselves, God will leave nothing unrevenged. But if we would judge ourselves, we should not at all be judged. But

while we are judged, we are chastised by our Lord, that we may not be condemned together with this world. O meekest Truth, Who appointest us judges of ourselves in a case of delinquency against Thee! What more merciful? O unspeakable clemency, that the Divine justice rests satisfied with our human verdict! If any one that is assailed for some heinous fact, expected a judge to be designed by his Prince to determine the cause and give sentence, how desirefully solicitous would he be that some one of his kindred, or country, or acquaintance, should be deputed? How would he rejoice, if one allied by blood, or intimately familiar with him, were appointed? Behold thy happy lot and the Divine benignity, Who will have thee to be judge of thyself! If two courts of judicature were proposed to a criminal, in one whereof presided an uncouth and rigid man, who proceeded with the strictest severity; in the other his kinsman and of a mild temper, who used a more favourable interpretation of the law; if he would choose to be arraigned at that most rigorous tribunal, what would such a choice differ from madness and despair? Oh, how madly desperate would that man show himself, who should refuse to be brought to a bar where, I will not say his friend and ally, but even the criminal himself shall be judge; but would stand to the verdict of that other most impartially just, where God shall be the severe Inquisitor and offended Judge! If thou wert to have thy wish in choosing an umpire of thy misdemeanours, either thy partner in the same fault, or thy accuser and the party offended, wouldst thou refer thyself to this latter's arbitration? Not thy companion, but thou thyself, or God offended, must be thy judge, and He Who is undoubtedly to punish

thee. It is impossible for thee to avoid some punishment and condemnation: either judge thyself, or our Lord will severely adjudge thee to torment. Do not then shun thy own judgment, for so thou shalt shun the Divine, and not be condemned at that tribunal.

Be sure not to make greater account of any temporal thing than of exacting an account of thyself; neither is there anything more reasonable than this. If we be desirous to reform others, why will we leave ourselves deformed and irregular? Summon thyself at least twice a day to the bar, and judge thyself most impartially, as if that were the dreadful day of the last doom. If at that hour, when all mankind standing, appalled with horror and perplexity, before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their definitive sentence, the Judge should deal so favourably with thee alone, as to separate thee from that huge mass, content thou shouldst be thy own examiner on this condition, that if thou judged and punished thyself in good earnest, He would stand o thy judgment; but if superficially, thou wert to be added to the mean heap, to be adjudged without all mercy together with them to torments, what immense thanks wouldst thou deem this favour of Christ worthy of? With what solicitude wouldst thou search, pry, and sift into thyself, not sparing thyself in the very least? Such a favour is now granted thee. Negotiate in thy daily examens and confessions God's cause, seeking seriously His greater glory and thy own confusion. Next consider Christ judging with all severity the rest of mankind, and pronouncing the concluding sentence of damnation; beholding Him on the other side crucified for thy sake, and thyself alone busy in discussing thyself at His feet on Mount Calvary,

together with the Mother of Jesus, John, and Magdalen, melting into tears, even the beloved Jesus Himself weeping and crying—Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he doth. Employed in the self-same thoughts, come to thy confessor's feet in full hope of pardon, if thou be not too indulgent in pardoning thyself; considering thy Jesus little regarding thy sins and their punishment, and only solicitous to sign thy pardon, laying aside all thought of their number and greatness, as being only desirous to show favour and indulgence, because He had committed to Thy care and trust a diligent inquiry into them, and a due revenge by way of satisfaction. Be faithful to Christ, and let nothing pass unpunished, and He, most faithful to thee, will exhibit nothing but mercy.

Reduce first of all into thy mind the matter whereof thou art to give an account, to wit, all the benefits Heaven hath conferred upon thee; next, examine in what thou hast abused them, together with thy ingratitude; lastly, humble thyself, be sorry, bewail even thy least defects, and purpose firmly by God's assistance never to fall into the same. Strengthen this thy purpose, as men are wont to strengthen their contracts, first before witnesses; renew it in the presence of the Angels and Saints, and then, security for performance being given, call the Blessed Virgin and thy special patrons, and appoint them sureties, adding also a penalty of forfeiture. Impose upon thyself in case of relapse some voluntary affliction by way of penance. Strive always to advance in goodness, for if the Angels conceive joy for one sinner becoming repentant, why will there not be much more jubilee for the just in his progress from virtue to virtue? Wax not negligent in this search into

thyself, it being the key which unlocks all the treasures of fervour. Many religious men become tepid, by reason of their remissness in this exercise. Hence many grow lukewarm; hence divers old soldiers in the service of piety have forsaken their colours after a lamentable manner, because contenting themselves with a slight and superficial search and sorrow: what they seemed to bemoan this hour, they committed the next.

Thou neglectest not to renew and reinforce the decayed spirits of thy body twice a day by corporal refection; it imports thee to be no less industrious in recruiting the forces of thy soul, and good purposes by sifting into thy actions. Yea, not twice, but at the end of each work, whether thou hast performed it well or no? God, Who was no way obnoxious to error, considered and examined all His works as soon as He had made them. He created light, and presently taking a view of it, saw that that fair creature was good. He made the luminary bodies, and forthwith contemplating them, perceived they also were good. He daily entered into examen of each work in particular, and then a general survey of them all, and found that they were very good. So must thou view each of thy actions apart, and then all of them together. If thou hast not performed them well, thou wilt by the line and square of a due discussion of thy conscience discover what is amiss, to amend it for the future. Moses, in the bosom-retirement of his breast, cleansed that hand which he found covered over with leprosy. This serious examen of oneself is the storehouse of virtues; there the fear of God, there humility, self-knowledge, compunction, perseverance, fervour, there prudence is minted to a current coin. Lay wait chiefly to intercept some one vice, which thou

must with importunity both prosecute and persecute, till thou hast utterly vanquished it; and after this manner by little and little must thou endeavour to subdue them all.

CHAPTER LIII.

How we must be affected towards others.

Let this be thy employment all the day long in all thy own actions, even those that are commendable, to accuse thyself; and in thy neighbour's though discommendable to excuse others. It fares not with our conscience as it doth with our countenance; we see other men's faces, not our own; but we behold our own conscience, not another's, wherefore we ought, and are only able, to judge and condemn ourselves. If thou thyself, who art only able to discern thy own conscience, findest it a difficult business to pass verdict upon many of thy actions, whether they be good or bad, whether thou hast given consent or no, how darest thou judge others, whose hearts are unfolded to none but God? If thou canst not discover thy own mind, why dost thou judge of another's? If thou art unable to discern thy own, how darest thou pass sentence upon thy neighbour's? If thou weighest not thy own proceedings, why dost thou draw others into thy balance? But for the most part those that stand idle in the market-place are the people which busy themselves in murmuring and slandering others; so he that neglects his own soul spends his censure more freely upon his neighbour's. We might long ago have learned by

experience how liable our judgments are to error. Even in corporeal things and those which have but an extrinsical appearance and colour, our senses are very frequently deluded; how much more obvious is it to err in judging the hearts of men, of which they have no perception at all, whose motions are swayed by free-will, and in which God's grace works secretly so many miracles. Although one seem to have clear arguments to ground a sinistrous suspicion, yet one ought not to judge sinistrously, because he may easily judge amiss. While the companians of St. Boniface were busy in his search, they suspected, not without ground, according to the tenour of his former behaviour, that he was in the company of some lewd harlot; but he in the meantime, burning with a far different flame of the love of God, was suffering cruel torments for the faith of Christ. So fallacious was a probable judgment: how much then wilt thou miscarry in thy groundless and improbable suspicions? He that is in superiority over another, and is by office to judge, must not condemn him unless he prove evidently faulty; in things doubtful the criminal is absolved; how darest thou of thy own uncertain and erroneous brain condemn him who is better than thyself, and by whom thou art to be judged?

If thou didst love others as Christ commands thee, thou wouldst not judge them: charity covers a multitude of sins. For this reason thou forbearest to judge thyself, because self-love inclines thee to excuse thyself; and if thy love towards thy brethren were such, thou wouldst not censure, but excuse them. Christ being to judge mankind, He Himself became Man, and vested Himself with our nature. And thou also, if thou wilt judge or reprehend

another, must put on his person, and proceed with him as thou wouldst be proceeded withal. Let this be the first feat of thy charity, not to be scandalized or offended with thy brother; the second, not to offend him; the third, to help and assist him in what thou art able; nevertheless, because thy love is but lukewarm, thou art often defective in thy duty, and takest offence unjustly even at the innocent, disdaining them many times that are acceptable to God. Where is thy charity towards Him, where is thy love to Jesus, if those be a displeasing eyesore to thee who are so pleasing to Him, so deep in His favour, and do Him better service than thou a sinner? If thou lovedst God and His immense goodness, thou wouldst love all for His goodness; the good, because they are good; the bad, because they may be good. Not only an elaborate piece of workmanship, but the very materials of which it is made, are had in no small request. Of evil many become good; we must not disdain them. This is to love all for goodness; this is to love all in God, when we love for that which cannot be loved without God, as goodness, justice, virtue, and the like.

If thou didst love the goodness of God, thou wouldst love all in God, and covet that all loved Him, and wouldst put to a helping hand and be solicitous in this behalf. Of much different strain is the zeal of human and divine love. Human goodness is finite and narrow-bounded, not sufficing for all; nay, not even for many without less falling to each one's share, and therefore men endeavour what they can that none else love what is dear to them. But because the goodness of God is infinite, and more than abundantly sufficient for all, and our love of such a limited condition, that it cannot

correspond to so great goodness; therefore God's desire is, that each one love it, and approve our love and co-operate towards it, to the end they may discharge and satisfy for that goodness which we are not able with any love of ours to equal. Thou lovest God imprudently, unless thy desire be that all love Him; for thou must love Him more than thyself, and thy desire is that all love thee though thou be so very bad; why are thy wishes on God's behalf more barren and bounded, He being so extremely good?

O infinite goodness of God, Who loved me so much, the meanest and very outcast of sinners, that being not content to love me, Thou wouldst moreover that all should love me, and commanded it too; why shall not I covet that all love Thee, and procure it to the utmost of my power? Yea, Thou hast obliged all, by Thy precept and Blood, that they should love me no less than Thou lovedst me, and every one loves himself. Give me grace, that I also may observe these examples of love, that I may love all. Thou saidst: This is My precept, that you love one another as I loved you. And again: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Thou, O Lord, lovedst me ere I loved Thee; Thou, O Lord, lovedst me, not for any commodity redounding to Thee, but to me. Thou lovedst me with an immense love, for none hath greater charity than this, that one give his soul for his friends. Thou didst love me with a perseverant love. Thou art He Who when He loved His who were in the world, He loved them to the end. These are the conditions with which Thou lovedst me, and must be the rule conformably to which I must love others. O my soul, learn love from the love of Christ, and love them as thy own life whom Christ loved

more than His, and will in them be loved and worshipped.

If Christ lay sick in bed (thou will not deem it indecency that He be supposed languishing for our good, Who for our salvation took really upon Him our languors), or pinched with hunger, and some other poor body lay also sick in another bed, and were pressed with the same want, and thou shouldst demand of Christ whether of the two He would have thee to relieve first, Himself or that other party; I believe He would piously answer, that other; for Christ Himself would defraud His own mouth of meat to assuage a poor man's hunger. Serve then and reverence Christ in such a one; if thou canst not do it in fact, do it at least by prayer and compassion, not only in corporal necessities, but much more in spiritual. God prizeth so highly an alms bestowed on the body, that He promiseth Heaven for its reward, nor assigns any other cause of acquitting them in the dreadful day of doom; how much more will He esteem an alms bestowed on the soul, for which He deigned to die? O the infinite charity of God! O most loving Saviour, Who gavest Thy soul for sinners, grant that I may love their souls as Thou lovedst me. I will take a pattern from Thy love to know how I am to love those whom Thou lovedst, and not from my own; neither will I love my neighbour as I loved myself, for then I shall love him but untowardly. I knew not how to love myself, how can I love others? How could I love myself who loved my own will, who loved iniquity? But I will love my neighbour as I ought to love myself, desiring Thy will may be accomplished in him, and he more plentifully enriched with Thy grace; that all may serve Thee most fervently, and adore Thee in Spirit and Truth.

CHAPTER LIV.

How ungrateful we are to God.

How unhappy is our heart in Thy benefits, O Happiness of Saints, since a slender courtesy afforded us by some poor miscreant, yea, even by a savage creature, stirs us up to an act of benevolence; and yet we are not struck through love into an amazement at the immense beneficence of Thy beneficial nature! How comes this to pass, that if a man had done it we should deem it a huge favour, and for this very reason that God does it, though He do incomparably more, we slight the benefit, and seek not to show ourselves grateful? Doth water lose its nature because it is in the sea and not in some sorry vessel? Shall it forfeit the nature of a benefit because God is the Author of it, Whose nature is to be beneficial? We should rather argue thus: It is water, because it is drawn out of the sea. Can heat, because it is in the fire, be thought not to be calefactive, and that only to be so which is in a foreign and violent subject? The ardour of fire is more effectual, and warms more intensely, than heat in wood: so the blessings from God are more beneficial than those from men, because God sourceth them. It is the nature of goodness to be beneficial, as it is of fire to heat. Beneficence in men is nothing so vigorous or taking, because it is not so proper to their nature, indigence

only being connatural to them. Water is purer in the fountain than in the stream, and benefits derived from God are more refined than those from men, who for the most part mar the nature of a benefit. Why then shall blessings lose their prerogative and respect, because they are imparted by God; which, though much meaner, if they proceeded from any contemptible man, unless we expressed our gratitude for them, we could not have the face to appear before men, but should blush with confusion, so far as to be ashamed of ourselves, and become infamous in our own conceit? And yet because they are from God, we hold ourselves privileged to be ungrateful, and dare without blushing appear before Him and His Angels. Why are gifts less valuable and of inferior rank because they come from God, since in them alone are verified all the conditions of being truly beneficial, and giving us relief in our greatest distress? Is a benefit more unhappy for flowing from the Fountain of all Happiness?

Why do we not love Thee, O Lord, Who gavest us our whole creation, and are grateful towards robbers for pillaging us but in part; yea, even towards dogs for guarding what is ours? We love him that supplies us in our want, and we melt not into love of Thee Who gavest us both essence and life, when we were no better than nothing. What greater want or penury than to have nothing, yea, to be nothing? If God relieved us then by giving us a life and being, why are we not mindful of such an alms, since we are grateful to him who affords us but a mean support of life? Can it be judged a more signal mercy to give wherewith to live, than to give life itself? Benefits are esteemed much greater for coming in the nick of time, when our indigency was most pressing, and when what is

given comes voluntarily and without paying so much as a begging for it. What greater penury than to have nothing, which is the greatest of all? God then did us a great good turn, worthy of the greatest love, in relieving so urgent a necessity. It is an inestimable benefit that He gave it so freely of His own accord, when nothing of ours preceded which could exact it. The more pressing one's want is, although what is given be but a trifle, it is more highly valued than when more is given in a less exigence. Thou, O Lord, when we were extremely needy in our nothing didst not bestow a little upon us, but all whatsoever we are.

Let us sum up all the benefits conferred upon men, and because it were too prolix to recount all, let us consider that which in the judgment of all nations is held the greatest and beyond all recompense, and let us compare it with the least Divine benefit of our creation. Nature teacheth and preacheth that we can render no equality of recompense to our parents. And they what have they given us? A stenchy body subject to sins and diseases, and all the miseries of this life; insomuch that they are in a certain manner more benevolent towards loathsome worms than towards their children, for they produced them undefiled with any fault, nor liable to the Divine wrath; but they bring forth their children accursed, wearing the badge of sin, worthy of death and imprisonment. How, O Lord, can we be unmindful of Thee, and impudent in our carriage towards Thee, since Thou gavest us all our being; a body at that instant fitly accommodated, unblemished, qualified with diversity of endowments; a soul of a most excellent nature, pure, immortal, spiritual? The benefit we receive from our parents cost them but little. Thou, O

Lord, gavest us all ourselves, our whole body, our whole soul, pure and unspotted, which benefit cost Thee no less than the expense of Thy omnipotency. Moreover, what we have from our parents they gave it not, but Thou by their means. They of themselves gave us only a liableness to sin and an ill omen of future miseries. What they afforded us was not out of pure love to us. Thou, O Lord, out of an excess of charity to us created us. It was not an effect of their affection that they begot us and not some other, that being neither in their power nor choice. Thy love, O Lord, created me and no other, it was Thy election. Thou, O Lord, beholding an endless multitude of men which Thou couldst have created, who would have served Thee much better than I, picked me out, a poor miscreant, for no merits of my own. Neither was Thy love impeded by foreseeing that I would prove more disloyal than any of the rest, and the greatest and wretchedest of sinners, more ungrateful than Lucifer the first-begotten of sin, and Judas the betrayer of Thy Son, and Antichrist His opposite.

Behold, O Lord, for one only of Thy benefits I stand not only indebted and owing myself to Thee, but am upon many scores indebted; how then shall I be able to acquit myself of others? I owe myself wholly to Thee, because Thou gavest me wholly to myself; I owe myself wholly, because Thou disbursedst Thy omnipotency upon me; I owe myself wholly, because Thou gavest me myself not repiningly; I owe myself wholly, because Thou didst it lovingly; I owe myself wholly, because Thou didst it calling me by design out of millions; I owe myself wholly, because Thou didst it foreseeing that I would surpass all in ingratitude. O Lord, since I stand indebted my whole self under so many titles

for one sole benefit, grant that once at least I may pay my share for Thy endless ones; grant that I may make by way of discharge an oblation to Thee of my whole heart. And since Thou conferredst not once only this one benefit, so variously manifold, but art still continuing and daily enlarging it by a perpetuated conservation, this debt of my whole self is daily doubled to an infinitude. Be then endlessly taking my heart, not for the good Thy benefit works in me, but for the good it effects in Thee by making Thee beneficial to me, as also for the fruit I reap from it. If therefore this least of Thy favours be so great that I owe no less than my whole self upon so many several claims for it; what shall I do for my redemption, that excelling my creation as much as God excelleth man? In my creation Thou gavest me to myself, in my redemption Thou gavest Thyself and restoredst me.

CHAPTER LV.

That God's benefits are without number.

Bless yet more and more, O my soul, our Lord, and be not unmindful of His retributions, whether towards His enemies or towards His friends, towards His Angels or the beasts of the field; whether towards the Blessed in remunerating them, or the devils in tormenting them: all His retributions are thy so many peculiar favours. O God, how am I ingulfed in an ocean of Thy beneficence! Whatsoever Thou dost is a benefit, yea, and my peculiar benefit. The actuations and productions of light are light; and a light that is exposed for one man's direction illuminates all that stand about him: so dost Thou, O Light of Truth, O Nature of Goodness; and therefore because Thou art beneficial, Thou canst do nothing which is not beneficial, and it is necessarily consequent that the benefit Thou bestowest upon one, is not only proficuous to him, but all. Each best gift and perfect blessing is descending from above from the Father of lights, because Thou diffusest them like unto the diffusions of light, Thou communicating Thyself to all, without any decrease or impoverishment. A light remaining still entire divides its beams to all; and another, without any prejudice to it, may borrow from its flame. Whatsoever the sun darts forth is light; all may see by means of it, unless

they wilfully seal up their eyes. All the effects which God produceth are so many benefits, and by them each one may help and profit himself, unless he will be foolish and perverse. Thy ardent love doth always, O Lord, accompany Thy gifts as heat doth light. This is an immense privilege concomitant to them, that they are so many pawns and pledges of Thy love. Although this be not patent to the eye, yet it discovers itself in the beneficial effect. For though we see only the light which the sun communicates, not the heat, yet this doth still attend the other.

O Father of lights, what thanks am I indebted to Thee for the university of Thy benefits conferred upon all, those credentials of Thy love, which love I chiefly embrace and adore in Thy works! Who will not stand amazed at the inventiveness of Thy goodness, making the benefit of all the benefit of each one, and the benefit of each one the benefit of all, private ones public, and public private? All the works of nature, all the wonders of grace, all the predestinate, all the blessed, are my benefits; all the prosperity, all the calamities that befall man, are so many favours which Thou lovingly bestowest upon me. O ungrateful man, wouldst not thou love God with the whole impetuosity of thy heart, if He should exempt thee from damnation, thou carrying the guilt of hell-fire by dying in some damnable sin, but should create another much better than thee, deputing him in thy place to suffer for thee that hell of torments? God did much more than this. I omit that He fathered our faults upon Himself, deigning to die for our sake; this now amazeth me, although it be incomparably less, that He would shut the gates of mercy against many and sentence them to damnation to save thee; for if thou didst

see but few condemned, thy fear would be much less, and thou perchance thyself make one in that heap; if two only or three, thy fear would yet be more lessened, and thou mayest presume with more certainty, one of them would be thyself; if none at all, thy fear would be none, and thou mayest well think that thou alone wouldst incur that misery, or, which is worse, be much more frequent in sinning and less observant towards God. Therefore the torment and damnation of so many souls is to me a great benefit. O Light of my heart, with how bright beams doth Thy love shine towards Thy elect! Thou madest other creatures for man, and him Thou damnest for other men whom Thou hast elected to salvation. Angels become servants to men, yea, Thou Thyself wast made Man: what wonder if Thou wouldst have one man serve another? If for some respects of temporal life Thou permittest man to serve man, and a slave his master; for the attainment of eternal life and increase of glory a reprobate must serve an elect. Behold, O ungrateful spirit, if an evil, so prejudicial as that of punishment is, proves thy advantage, the advantages also of others will turn to thy benefit.

With such skill doth God manage His works that each one redounds to the good of all, and the very pains of the damned are so beneficial to all, that they are beneficial even to them themselves; for in that height of misery their cup is not tempered merely with malice, but some mixture of Divine justice, which is very savoury. God is so bountifully good, such a skilful Alchymist, that He turns dross into gold, that is, our very miseries into mercies; and, which is yet more, out of the worst minerals of sinfulness, they alone being only bad, He extracts precious metals, and sometimes even

the most precious. Thou, O Lord, conferrest Thy benefits with such a strong and open hand, that even from sin, where Thou hast neither power nor activity, (Thou being both impotent to act in it or concur to another's acting,) Thou both drawest and art able to draw great good. Thy skill knows how to extract immense blessings and virtues out of sin. Light reverberating upon a condense and obscure body, on which it cannot act, is so far from being eclipsed that it doubles itself by reflection; neither is Thy beneficence ever defeated or rendered ineffectual. Out of sin, where nothing is but preposterously bad, Thou rectifiest all to my good, decreeing thence Thy beloved Son's Incarnation. As well from my own sins as those of other's Thou knowest how to take an occasion of being beneficial on my behalf. When I hear of a crime committed by another, I am sorry for the misfortune of my brother, but take an occasion thence of thanking Thee, because I hope for mercy from Thy hands either for him or me. I yield Thee thanks, because Thou wilt derive thence no small good to me, unless I will become quite blind and shut my eyes against the light.

Sing praise once more, O my soul, to the Father of lights, and be not forgetful of all His retributions; for they all are His gifts, even those that seem to flow from men, and which thou receivest immediately from them. For if thou must persuade thyself that all the crosses and grievances which befall thee from men come from God, why wilt thou not also be of the same mind concerning good, His nature being goodness itself, and He so prone to communicate it? All the light which beautifies the heavens, though some little star or the moon by night do dart it forth, proceeds from the sun, though

He, the Author, be not seen: in like manner each blessing and benefit, though received from man, flows from God, and is but a ray of His goodness. This is the main comfort which sustains man's life amidst such a world of miseries as attend it, that nothing can happen but by God's permission; and whatsoever He permits can be no other than a benefit according to the nature of His goodness; and what benefit soever befalls us proceeds from Him, and whatsoever proceeds from Him is my benefit, and ordered for me and my good. Corporal afflictions and the miseries of this life, whether I or any other tolerate them—general dearths, diseases, pestilences—all these are my benefits, O Lord, Thou afflicting others for my good. O God, how deeply am I indebted to Thee, Who to the end I, poor miscreant, may receive thence some good inspiration, stickest not to strike the very Kings and Monarchs of the world dead, being little or nothing moved with the tears and calamities of so many kingdoms, that I may draw thence some good document. A congruous thought of some poor peasant, becoming contrite, is more prevalent with Thee than whole nations of people. Grant, O Lord, that I may be thankful for these, and, both in my own behalf and others, love Thee in all Thy works, as Thou lovedst me in all Thy benefits.

CHAPTER LVI.

That God's love in our redemption appears infinite.

O IMMENSE Love, how dost Thou exhaust Thyself in deserving well at my hands, since Thou hast left Thyself no power to act, nor wisdom to invent, nor will to wish greater matters than what is already done for me! For no remedy more noble and effectual could be invented, to give redress to mankind than the Incarnation of the Son of God, which was a mercy beyond expression. O immense beneficence and excess of love to which the Divine omnipotency submitted, and yielded itself as it were overcome! Thou hast gone beyond all the stratagems of God, and put a stint to these His sacred and unlimited desires; why dost thou not make use of Thy infirmity, suspend my thoughts, bounding my desires in such sort, that I may endeavour, think, and wish nothing besides Thee? We thy children, O Lord, whom Thou hast nurtured up by creation, despised Thee; how can we, whom Thou hast honoured and exalted even to be sharers of Thy Majesty, how can we, I say, contemn, and rather not love, Thee, Who for love of us vilified Thyself so far as to partake of our vileness? O Lord, how comfortable is this benefit of our redemption to me, when I behold Thee groaning under a heavy burden of afflictions, joint-sufferer in our

miseries, and all this out of mere love and affection to us; couldst not Thou contrive some other means of redeeming us with less liableness to the rigour of justice? Couldst not Thou have created some nobly-qualified Angel who might undergo at least the pains of Hell? Yea, couldst not Thou Thyself, even complying with the strict tenour of justice have accomplished it without such a world of torments? But Thou didst it to take up and possess the whole extent of our love. Perchance if our Redeemer had been different from our Creator, that is, if one redeemed us and another created us, we should have had more love for our Redeemer than Creator; and for that reason Thou wouldst be both the one and other, so to become the object of all our love; and that this Thy love might be more conspicuous, Thou didst not aim at a bare sufficiency or equality, but at an overabundance and inundation, that in such a boundless sea we might see Thy love which knows no bound.

Thou Who madest all things in number, weight, and measure; Thou Who being Author of nature rejectest superfluities, why wouldst Thou, as it were, confound all in Thy Redemption? Transported beside Thyself and Thy ordinary manner of proceeding, Thou observedst no number of torments, no weight of Thy Precious Blood, no measure of necessary satisfaction; but in an overmeasure of Thy sufferings Thou gavest us a superabundant redemption, measuring out all without any measure at all. Surely the reason was, because an immense love was chief architect in so great a work, in which Thou intendedst to render Thy love conspicuously visible, we that are incredulous, not believing it out of other Thy feats and benefits. But though Thou proceededst with such a loving extravagancy, Thou

art not changed from Thy former principles and what Thou wast before. Thou keepest proportion in all Thy works, and here also didst Thou observe a mean, but it was to do all without mean, because Thy love is so, and otherwise there would be no exact quality. In like manner I behold here Thy infinity, for as much as Thou carriest Thyself without any restriction or proportion at all. This benefit forceth love from me, because it convinceth Thee to be a lover: out of Thy other benefits I conjecture Thee to love, in this I see it. The rest hinder not but that one may judge them to proceed from some other motive than love; of this none can suspect other but that it is done with immense love. Although the rest excluded love, nothing would be derogated from Thy majesty, nor the Divine honour suffer detriment. Here would be a defect of congruency, if we regard the authority of the Divinity, supposing they should flow from any other fountain. The rest though done without love, would yet be worthy of praise and reverence: but this, if love interceded not, would seem an eyesore, I will not say in God, but even in man, and a thing worthy of dispraise and contempt. But because it implies an impossibility that Thou do anything less beseeming Thyself I am certain beyond all peradventure that Thou lovest me. It would be deemed a kingly business to maintain, uphold, enrich, and be each way beneficial even to those who deserved no love; this, I say, would well become the highest majesty: but if a great monarch should debase himself to mean drudgeries, should consort with scullions and cooks and the grooms of his stable, and dressing himself in their liveries should sit at their table, who would not slight him, and account him no better than a mad man? Nothing

could be pretended for his excuse but he that were transported with love, and yielded for a time to this transportment, so to work upon the affection of the party beloved, or used it as a stratagem to bring his desires to a happy issue. The philosophers themselves confess love to be so privileged, that it can never be blemished with infamy, yea, that it wipes off all these stains which if contracted without love, would be held indecent and ugly; but love turns them all into merit, and transforms infamy into glory. Thou, O Lord, canst do nothing unseeming Thy Divinity, wherefore whatsoever Thou didst by evacuating Thy authority, and stooping to the condition of an abject creature, all was done out of love to me.

Lock up in thy heart, O my soul, this illustrious pledge of Divine love, Divine humility, which by love's prerogative is the highest glory. Love excuseth the majesty of God, the same exalteth the humility of God. This love forceth a reciprocal love from me: fire enkindles fire, and love provokes to love. Let Thy love, O Lord, inflame me with love of Thee: Thou Who camest to send this fire. But couldst Thou not, O Lord, send it without coming Thyself, and becoming Incarnate? Why was it necessary that Thou shouldst become man to inflame men? Was it because fire doth not operate but upon an approximate subject? For fire in the purity of its nature and in its element is said not to be active, nor to enkindle any solid matter; but it is requisite that it be in a foreign subject, and rendered visible: so Thou, O Lord, though in the refinedness of Thy purest nature Thou be love and a burning fire, yet Thou didst not inflame man but by becoming Man: like as elementary fire is not active upon wood unless it be

first enkindled in wood, or some other matter more gross and condense than is the firmament, as then it will enkindle other wood, it becoming a conspicuous and visible flame. Thy visible love, Thou being made Man, cannot but inflame and set man all on fire.

That benefit is much heightened which anticipates all entreaty, and is conferred without any intercession; and much more if it come unhoped for or unexpected, for blessings unlooked for affect one more feelingly, and most of all if they prevent all wishes and desires; for nothing befalls us more agreeably and to our heart's content, than what is given without the expense of so much as a wish. Now what must that needs be which forestalls all kind of expectancy? What will that be which could not so much as enter into our thought? Such a one is this benefit and unexpected Sacrament of our Redemption, which if any one, before it was intimated to us, had begged to be done after the manner it is done, his prayers would have been thought blasphemy, his hope a mad rashness, his wish a sacrilegious will, his fancy impiety. An unexpected gift is most grateful: what will that be which was never so much as conceited? Thy beneficence indulgently granted what our indigency would have fancied impossible.

But above all, the frontispiece and inscription of love, which this benefit carries engraven, (that being the prizer and taxer of gifts,) doth most affect me. All gifts are testimonials and credentials of love; what more creditable than this? Gifts are not rated according to their bulk, but the remonstrance of love that accompanies them. This is an immense favour, which, that it may stand in the rank of benefits, not of disgraces, it carries in its front in

capital letters the immense love of God. O Lord, if I be indebted to Thee whatsoever I am for my creation, what shall I owe Thee for Thy love? I acknowledge myself to owe more than myself, yea, as much more as Thy greatness exceeds my nothing, Thou Who gavest Thyself to me in Thy nativity, in Thy life, in Thy death, in Thy resurrection, and lastly in that sacred banquet of Thy most holy Body. Effect that, whatsoever was Thine by creation, and Thou repairedst by redemption, I may make it all Thine by love. I were not able to make condign recompense for the least of Thy benefits, though by way of thanksgiving I should endure all the pains of hell for all eternity; the reason is, because it procees from the infinitude of Thy love, which infinitely exceeds any infinity of recompense from creatures: what then shall I be able to do for so many, and those so signal, and chiefly for this, in which Thy boundless charity reflects more perspicuously than do the sunbeams?

CHAPTER LVII.

How deservedly God is to be loved, and chiefly for Himself.

I WILL sum up the titles by which Thou most justly exactest my love, and the delinquencies of my tepidity and ingratitude. I ought with all ardency to love Thee, O most amiable Lord, both because Thou art good, and because Thou art loving; both because Thou art a benefactor and my benefactor; both because Thou art my Maker and a patient endurer of my imperfections.

God is so good and beautiful in Himself, that though He had not made us the object of His love, nor the subject of His beneficence, nor the issue of His creation, yet He were to be loved above all lovers, benefactors, and creators whatsoever; yea, although He should hate us and be injurious on our behalf; for that bottomless ocean of goodness and beauty would expiate any injury whatsoever, and much more effectually than doth beneficence. If God had beheld thee heretofore as an object of hatred, and being at enmity had offended and sought revenge, wouldst thou not pardon and even love Him, He making so large satisfaction by so many benefits, so far as not to spare His own Son, but gave Him up to death, suffering a privation of that, the absence whereof causeth the greatest grief? One must pardon an injury in him who is

beneficial, for the force of a benefit ought to extinguish revenge and anger: but God's previous merits being so great, He deserves more than pardon. If then His beneficence would suffice to clear Him of all injuriousness, much more would His goodness, the cause of beneficence, it being more noble, and sufficiently effectual to make amends for all losses and injuries sustained by Him. God's goodness is greater than His beneficence, because this flows from that; and effects rather fall short of their cause than otherwise. One said of an ill-deserving man, I have received no good from thee but much harm, and yet for all that I cannot but love thee. O True Goodness, let me rather say of Thee than Thy image of clay, I cannot but love Thee although I should receive no good from Thee but much evil: what then shall I say now, when Thou lovest me without mean, and art beneficial above measure?

We sometimes love men whom we never saw nor heard of nor they us, nor do they rank us in the legend of their love; but we affect them merely for the report of their honesty. We could take content in their conversation, rejoice at their sight, and honour the very memory of them; and can the goodness of God be unworthy of that which a mere human goodness claims as its due? A man's honesty may be such as to deserve love without any obligation of piety, he not being our parent; without any obligation of thankfulness, he not being our benefactor; without any obligation of love, he not loving us at all; and shall not the authority of the Divine goodness suffice of itself to the same effect? Who is not moved with some sense of benevolence towards Jonathan for the loyalty of his friendship, notwithstanding the emulation of his

father's kingdom; or towards David for his clemency in sparing the life of his enemy Saul, though it had purchased him no less than a good empire? Who hath not some affection for Judas Machabeus for his singular love towards his law and country? And it is not any alliance with them, or other particular interest, but mere virtue, that gains this goodwill. Sum up into one man the perfections of all others, and suppose him composed all of miracles; let him have the wisdom of Solomon, the fortitude of Samson, the beauty of Absalom, the fidelity of Jonathan, the meekness of David, the fortune of Josue, and as loving towards his people as Moses; who would not be ambitious of that man's friendship, or covet once at least to treat and converse with him? Of how dull a relish would that man be thought who did not take gust in his aquaintance, even prescinding from all hopes of gain? O immense God, Thou art an aggregate of all good things and the total sum of all goodness; why do not we love Thee and aspire to Thy familiarity? O Lord, he that loves not Thee upon the mere score of Thy goodness, how ill-relished is he, how base-minded, how unwise! He that admires not it alone to the full, how ridiculous! Let us suppose ourselves created independently of God, and that we should hear of Him, as of one that ruled in another world, what we now believe; who would not covet to have such a God? Who would not admire and love His goodness and carriage towards the men of that His world, whose happiness we might well envy? His goodness then is not one whit the less for His being Creator, neither ought our admiration and love towards Him to decrease upon that pretence.

A very forcible motive also to make us love God

is, because He is of a loving nature. No ingredient is more operative in producing love than love itself. We carry a good will towards wicked men merely upon this score, that they seem to love us; and we take a kind of complacence in being loved by dogs. Although God were not good, nor our benefactor, nor Creator, yet, because He loves, He were to be loved, and chiefly because He is such an ardent lover. The greatness of which love is rendered perspicuous by the greatness of its gifts. What a love must that be by which He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son for its redemption? O men, what can you admire if you do not admire this, that God should love the meanest of creatures with such a tender and feeling heart?

But let us grant that God neither had loved us, nor made us, nor been beneficial to us; it would be our part to love Him, at least because He was so to others. If the virtuous actions of men deserve praise even at the hands of a stranger or barbarian, and force a kind of benevolence from them, shall so many feats of God's beneficence deserve less, their excess both in number and quantity amounting to an infinitude? An upright and beneficial man is loved by every one, even those that have not tasted his beneficence; but although God had left no great monument of His liberality to others, yet because He hath towards us, though it had not proceeded from the motive of love, (which cannot be done without some love,) we were still bound to love Him; yea, although He were neither good, nor loving, nor beneficial to us or others, (which nevertheless implies an impossibility,) for that sole reason that He made us, He were worthy of all love and respect. Our parents, although they be wicked,

though they themselves nursed us not up, yet they are to be loved and reverenced. Soldiers spend their lives and blood for their lawful King, though otherwise notoriously naughty: God is Father of all things, and the lawful Head of the world.

Neither is His patience a light shaft to wound us with love, He tolerating and pardoning us by it, while we play the impudent delinquents. The patience of an offender and harmer in accepting punishment, and standing in a preparation of mind to admit revenge and penalty for the wrong, turns the anger of the party offended into benevolence; and how can the patience of an unjust offender force benevolence from one justly displeased, and not the patience of the party affended obtain love of him that offends unjustly? O Lord, with how good title doth my ingratitude, and Thy pardon, exact my love! But if this alone be not weighty enough to sway the balance, add to it that He is our Father, our benefactor, yea, and beneficial towards all; how much am I bound to love Thee, Whose merits on my behalf are innumerable, and love boundless!

But these impulsives are not the most convincing, though they be severe exactors of my love. I am much more engaged to love Thee for Thy sole benevolence, wherewith Thou lovest me, than for all Thy other benefits besides; for that is the source of them all, and consequently more to be prized. And Thy love is so far from being exhausted, that it is forcible enough, if need were, to redouble Thy benefits and multiply them without stint, if they, which already abound, sufficed not for my salvation. Thy love is equivalent not only to Thy benefits already conferred, but even to those in possibility, if any greater be possible, and compriseth them all

in itself; yea, if we may use the manner of speech, even impossible ones: for true love is not confined to the limits of a real power, but imaginary wishes; which, though they have no place in God, by reason of the perfect fecundity and all-powerfulness of His nature, the excess of His love is not therefore any whit diminished, but we are as much indebted to Him as if they were. The sole love then of God alone is a more convincing motive of love than His boundless beneficence, for that comprehendeth all His benefits, not only now actual, but possible, and impossible, if there were any such to God.

There is yet another more pregnant cause of loving Him than all the precedent; for if we owe Him more love for His love to us than for His benefits, because these are only its issue, and so many sparks leaping from that glowing furnace of Divine charity, much more must we love Him for His goodness, this being the cause of love. How great must that goodness be, which is mother of so numerous a progeny of loves, and the stock from whence sprout so many benefits! Yea, we owe not only incredible love to the Divine goodness for the present affection He bears us, but much greater on our parts for the love He would bear us, if we would but dispose ourselves better and become less ungrateful, and consequently more capable of a more ample charity. We are not only indebted to the goodness of God one infinite love of God, but, as it were, infinitudes of love of an infinite God. Wherefore we must love Him more ardently for that He is good in Himself, than for that He is good and beneficial to us. O Lord, I love Thee for Thy benefits, because I read, reverence, and embrace in them Thy love; and I also love Thee for Thy love, because in it I behold, adore, and love

Thy goodness. The love of God is one perfection in God; but there are many more for which He is amiable, all which are comprised in the infinite Divine goodness and perfection, which is for infinite respects most worthy of love. I see not, O Lord, how my heart can cease, or suffer any interruption, in loving Thee, since Thou Who art infinite, purely out of Thy own goodness, lovedst us so incessantly from all eternity.

CHAPTER LVIII.

That we are not able to satisfy the goodness of God.

How do I lose myself, O Lord, in the consideration of Thy goodness which neither pen, nor tongue, nor thought is able to comprehend! If all the spirits both of heaven and hell, all souls created and creatable, should make it their task to describe it, and if each one had a sea for their inkhorn and a heaven for their paper, both the one and the other would be exhausted ere they could make a fit expression of its least parcel. If each star and drop of rain were so many tongues, their breath would fail them, and they grow mute, ere they could utter a congruous elocution. If all the minute sands of the sea were changed into so many intelligences, all their conceptions would prove but shallow even in respect of its least particle. But what am I doing while I dare declare Thy goodness by these similitudes? I confess, O infinite God, that all these exaggerations are ridiculous, although they be owned by most grave Doctors; they are all ridiculous in order to express it, and they destroy them-

selves; and he will show himself to be ridiculous who hopes to express himself competently by them. I am afraid, O Lord, lest while I go thus to work to praise Thy goodness, I may be thought to jeer and deride. Would not one that took upon him to set forth, in magnifying words, the wisdom of Solomon, be judged to scoff if he should say: So great is the wisdom of Solomon, that the lame-handed cannot describe it, nor the dumb utter it, nor the distracted make a true estimate of its greatness? If this commendatory be thought derision, these other comparisons in respect of Thy goodness are much less to the purpose, in order to whose expression, each creature is lame, dumb, and senselessly foolish. O Lord, my desire is to love Thee in the simplicity of my ignorance, and I will brook it patiently if I do not clearly understand how Thou art, which is not possible for me to do in this life. And although I can conceive nothing worthy of Thy goodness, forasmuch as my conceptions of it are obscure and incongruous, yet I solace myself in this, that Thy goodness is too great ever to be equalized by love. I solace myself, O Lord, that although Thou hadst not created us, nor been beneficial to us, nor made us the object of Thy love, but hatred, as my deserts at least exacted; yea, although it were impossible for Thee to be beneficial, and repugnant to Thy nature to love us as Thou dost; nevertheless, by reason of Thy perfection and goodness, and its matchless worth, nobody could love Thee to the full. Although all the leaves of trees, and piles of grass, all the sands of the sea, and motes of the sun, were all hearts, yea, although they were so many wills of burning Seraphim; yea, further, though all these, and all other possible creatures, were each one a Hierarchy of Seraphim,

whose love at each instant redoubled itself through all eternity, all this love of them all would be as nothing in recompense of Thy goodness; nay, it would blush in its presence. Neither is my meaning, that it would love Thee congruously for the whole extent of Thy goodness, but not so much as for Thy sole patience wherewith Thou toleratest me, not only while I so heinously offend Thee, but am so defectuously languid and remiss in loving Thee, so great a Good.

But in this also I solace myself, that though Thou art not sufficiently loved, neither canst Thou be sufficiently loved by creatures. Accept, O Lord, for my share, a small pittance of love in wish and desire. I offer up to Thee all the love of all creatures, even of those that are as yet but possible, summed up into one oblation. I myself alone would for each instant have all that their love, which will actuate them through all eternity; and though I were thus furnished, yet still should I have cause of shame and confusion. Pardon, pardon me, I most humbly beseech Thee, great Lord, nor resent these my slender votes and desires as affronts put upon Thee, but let my infirmity and Thy greatness plead my excuse. Accept of this my wish, which cannot worthily be styled a love worthy of Thee. Accept also of the pain I am put to, in grieving that all creatures are not enamoured of Thee. I grieve that so many souls, espoused to Thee by the ring of faith, and so many hearts of men, fit to love Thee most ardently, who might make themselves kings of the world and overtop the heavens, should lie wallowing in their own ordures, and perish by loving themselves and the frail and loathsome goods of this earth, neglecting Thee, O Beauty of creatures and Love of the universe.

CHAPTER LIX.

How great a benefit of glory we hope for.

God is so good and beneficial, that He suffers us while we set a false rate upon His benefits and our own good. Men are vexed with toiling and moiling all their life long to purchase some temporal good, and at length are frustrated of their expectation, reaping little or no fruit of all their labours: how can they hope to gain eternal, it being no part of their solicitude, they scarce ever admitting it into their thoughts? The goods, which they make their daily business, are not obtained with all their endeavours; and those which are distant as far as Heaven, they hope the earth will afford them without any labour. They are deeply afflicted for trifling goods, and are not so much as shallowly affected for the most important. How is it possible that one can proceed so ridiculously in a joy most serious, and so stupidly about a stupendous good? O most humble majesty of God, when I consider this last miracle of Thy love, I lose myself in a maze of amazement!

How great is that good, for whose greatness it behoved God not to be altogether liberal, but to expect the additional worth of virtue and our services, though they also be Divine benefits! In our creation and redemption Thou wast munificent when we least expected it, anticipating the wishes

and intentions of man; but to enter upon a state of glory, Thou expectest our joint concurrence with Thy grace. Good God! how vastly great must that good needs be, which obstructs by its greatness the full current of the Divine benignity, and requires our endeavour and labour? And God sells it at a dear rate, though He love otherwise to give all gratis. He sold it to St. Laurence for a broiling, to St. Paul for the price of his head, to St. Felicitas for her children, to St. Peter for the death of the cross. Yea, that He might sell it to us so dear, He Himself would buy it at an intolerable rate, to wit, His own death and ignominy of the Cross. God was pleased to bestow and confer His other benefits to make us covet and acquire this. How great must that needs be, for the coveting whereof His gifts and deeds were so stupendous? And yet, for all this, our hearts dilate not themselves sufficiently, nor are raised to a congruous strain of desire. If God attempted so many means to make us covet it, what ought we not to attempt to enjoy it? If God did and suffered so great things to legitimate us to a true title of such a gift, what ought we to do and suffer to enter upon it? It is plain nonsense to persuade ourselves that we can attain glory without labour, since God laboured so much to be able to give it. Notwithstanding all this, we incur a double delinquency in this gift more than in others, being liable both to ingratitude, and an action of contempt; forasmuch as we endeavour not to acquire that, for the acquiring whereof God was at such expense, yea, steered to that end all His actions. For His other benefits we are ungrateful, for this contemptuous, while we pursue it not with all the eagerness of our heart and spirit, but prefer a momentary pleasure before the grand affair of eternity.

What is it we are so ambitious of? Unless we be very greedy of glory, what hunt we so earnestly after? One moment sufficeth for the purchase of eternity. If the largest extent of the earth be but a point in respect of heaven, which is limitable, what will the narrow-bounded life of man be in regard of an unlimited eternity? And is it possible that time can be spared from the pursuit and attainment of glory? If having exposed a full exchequer of gold, God should say to some needy beggar: Thou art yet to live a thousand years, and shalt have nothing to sustain thy want for so long a respite of time, but what thou canst carry out of this treasury in the space of an hour: would he, thinkest thou, play the truant in that short interim, or spend that remnant in play or sleep? Why do we not bestir ourselves? An eternity expects us; nor can we lay up provision for it but in the short interstice of this life. Why do we interrupt so laudable a commerce, and sit still with our hands in our pockets? A thousand years carry less proportion to an eternity than a moment to a thousand years. What then will ten or twenty years, the utmost term of thy life, be in regard of an endless duration? Why ceasest thou from doing good? Life flies from thee, death runs towards thee, eternity stands still, and thou nevertheless art slow in coffering up eternal riches.

What a tedious journey undertook the Queen of Saba for no other end but to enjoy the sight of Solomon; her intention aimed not at any long stay, but to return presently to her country? Many come from remote lands to behold a man whom fame hath cried up for some rare talents of wit or art; and with how much more reason ought we be content to employ beforehand prolix endeavours,

to be able but once to contemplate God in the height of His majesty? If permission were given to all of making our journey to Heaven on foot, and nothing else were prerequired but only a pilgrimage of a thousand years, nobody I believe would decline the enterprise. Thy journey thither is much more compendious; thou needest not lift thy foot over thy threshold, nor out of thy bed, and why dare we not aspire with all our might to compass a good which is so nigh us? The sole lustre of gold, or flashings of a gem, are able to make men brook the roughness and danger of the seas, and the clarity of God strikes us no more than if we were insensible; neither do we prize an invaluable good at so much as the value of a little labour. But why do I insist upon eternity? Although glory were not eternal, but momentary, yet it is a good so boundlessly great, that an eternity of suffering should not be deemed too much to purchase it but for a moment, we beholding God intuitively in that instant.

Oh, how exquisite must that needs be, which God hath provided for His friends, if He prepared and gave Himself to be crucified even for His very enemies! How exquisite must that needs be, which cost God so dear, for which He was at so great expense, at no less than His life, authority, passion, and omnipotency? If God's manufactures, as the heavens, the motions of the stars, the nature of beasts, ordered only for the use of man, be to us such an object of admiration; what will that be which He exhibits for the ostentation of His majesty? If we admire the artifice of an eye, though in a loathsome creature or carriage-beast, what will that be, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can enter into the heart of man? If He hath made the fabric of this world—which is but the

cottage of miserable Adam, a bridewell of sinners, a cave of brute beasts—of such an admirable structure, that heathens at its contemplation were rapt into extasy, what shall we think of His own royal palace? As much as a nasty stable falls short of the court of some great monarch, which is adorned with gilded roofs, paved with precious stones, hung with most rich tapesty; yea, as much as the magnificence of the heavens exceeds the horror of a stinking prison, so much, and far more, must thou imagine the dwelling-place of the Blessed to surpass the beauty of this universe, which respectively will be found but an object of loathsomeness. All the comeliness of this world falls so far short of the seat of the Blessed, that all this artifice, which the philosophers admired with so much astonishment, is in respect of it but an eye-sore and blemish of deformity. If heaven and nature, which God provided as it were by-the-bye, and with as much ease as one can speak, be so ravishing; what will that be, which He hath from all eternity, on set purpose, prepared for those that make Him their love? In gifts of nature God carried Himself master-like, He made them all with a commanding word: but in His glory He resembles an industrious servant passing to and fro, seeking, as it were, to give content. If the beauty of this visible world, where He was not so solicitous to please, be so winning and enamouring; how much more pleasing will He be in that where He made it His task and study to please? The whole machine of the world was no more chargeable to Him than the expense of one voice; He made it with a word. But glory made Him, as it were, set His wits to work, and be as obsequious as a servant; yea, most patiently to brook disgraces, torments, and death itself.

If thou shouldst bestow a hundred years in speculating the greatness of glory, and shouldst frame some high conceit of its worth, thou mightest well deem all to be nothing, and thy conceptions to fall so far short of comprehending it, that thou canst not so much as conjecture thyself to have come nigh it. But in that imperfect idea which thou hast conceived, raise thyself to the gates of Heaven, and, beholding it open, take as clear and exact a view of it as thou canst; that being done, cast thy eyes upon the earth, and what is remarkable in its rarities; compare then the goods of both together, and see whether earthly things will abide the test. Wonder then at so many unfortunate endeavours of men in purchasing a little worldly pelf, or rather nothing, and their truantly sluggishness in seeking after the true good. Contemplate thence, from the top of the stars, the frustrated labours of mortals, and their certain hazards in obtaining an uncertain good; and do thou hear thy Sovereign inviting thee in such like words: Come enter into possession of My Kingdom and heavenly treasures. This is a most certain gift, sealed with no less a promise than that of Divine faith, and recommended to us by the diligence and death of Christ, Heaven having so voted it. Where is our ambition, our desire, if it do not display and pour forth itself upon this harvest of joys and magazine of true riches?

I should take it for no small dignity to be a sharer of Christ's ignominy; what then will it be to partake of His glory? If the ignominy of Jesus be glory, the glory itself of God, what will that be? If He so magnified the contumely of the Cross, as to exalt it upon the diadems of Emperors; if He did so honour His torments, what will He do to

His faithful friends? If He impart greater honour to the bones of Saints here among us, than all the Monarchs of the world enjoy, how much will He impart to their souls while they are resident with Himself. Wilt thou make a rude essay of the greatness of glory, how much it exceeds our labours? Calculate how much the celestial globe exceeds in magnitude the terrestrial, this latter being but a point in regard of the first heaven, and the first heaven another point, or rather nothing, in regard of the highest, in whose circumference, to one finger's breadth of earth, (so vast is the disproportion,) thousands of thousands of miles are corresponding in that heaven. The self-same God is Author both of grace and nature, and in point of bounty He would have His gifts in Heaven much exceed our labours on earth.

Let the expectation of this so great a good be to thee always a satiating repast. Whatsoever thou seest good on earth contemn it, as persuading thyself that thou shalt enjoy others in Heaven excessively greater. What evil soever annoys thee, fear it not, as hoping to be out of its reach for all eternity. Whatsoever is violently plundered from thee grieve not, as believing that all is deposited for thee, to be made good out of the treasures of Heaven. Whatsoever thou dost contemn or relinquish for the love of God, deem it not lost or cast away, as supposing that it is not only to be laid up, but also restored with a hundred-fold. Seek not to shun transitory labour, thou who hopest for a permanent good. Thou whose desire should animate thee to suffer in conformity with Christ upon the Mount of Calvary, without all hope of quitting the Cross, be sure not to quit patience, that thou mayest be conform to God in glory, with

an assured confidence of arriving at so great joy. If we believe all this to be true, why put we not hand to work, but stand like people in a dream?

How is it possible to have terrene things in any esteem, if we make heavenly things a part of our belief. Perchance we believe not so rightly as we ought. Wilt thou know how thy mouth belies thy heart, when thou affirmest that heavenly things are only great? If thy fortunes amounted to the value of a thousand pounds, wouldst thou not willingly give them all, if thou wert persuaded that by so doing thou couldst enhance them to a hundred thousand? But how doth it appear that we hold heavenly goods more valuable, since we are loathe, even being put in mind of the advantage, to give what men both joyfully and of their own accord give for the base trumpery of the earth? A hireling toils all day long for a poor salary; a soldier exposeth himself to a thousand deaths for another's kingdom; and we, for the glory of God and our own purchase of the Empire of Heaven, cannot watch sometimes one hour, and pray with Christ as it behoveth. Let us despise base and petty trifles, that we may receive immense rewards. It is not so estimable in itself to receive little, as to expect great matters. O lover and zealot of God, be sure to thirst and breathe after so great a good; but regard not so much thy own repose and commodity, as that thou shalt there securely love God without fear of interruption; and the greater thy glory is, the more shalt thou love Him. I am bound to thank Thee, O God of Truth, for joining the reward of our labours with the love of Thee and the desire of my will, which is nothing else but Thy love.

CHAPTER LX.

Of suffering death.

How much, O Lord, doth Thy beneficence transcend man's hope and expectation, since those very things which he accounts the greatest of evils, and nature's penalty, prove to Thy faithful an unparalleled benefit. He esteems it the worst of evils to die, and it is a great good, without which we shall never arrive to the fruition of all good. Thou dost very fondly, O man, in declining death, which is indeclinable; and not declining tepidity and faultiness, which may be declined. For death hath no evil in it which life gave not. The sin of Adam caused death, but was not so powerful as to make it evil; this damage only proceeds from Thy sin. Avoid sin and culpable negligence, and death will be a thing desirable.

Men fear little and regard less the death of the soul, which only is evil, and may be avoided; but the death of the body, which is not evil, and cannot be avoided, they seek to shun, though it be rather to be desired than that we adhere to this wicked world. Oh, the madness of men, who abuse and play, as it were, bopeep with that precept of Christ about loving our enemies, while they care for none but the world, which hates us, and is our professed enemy! Why do we affect this fleeting life which flies us, and do not affect that permanent life which

expects us? Why are we so solicitous for our temporal life, which we cannot retain, and neglect eternal, which we may obtain? We may have life everlasting if we will; we shall lose this transitory whether we will or no. And notwithstanding all this, men will not do profitably for eternal, what they do unprofitably for this temporal. They covet not the first, and they dread the death of the second, as one would do a mischief.

Death, moreover, is a rare invention of God's mercy, for it easeth us of all the molestations of this life, and takes away an eternity of miseries. What a pitiful thing would it be, if we were for all eternity subject to the necessities of rising daily and going to bed, of eating, of cold and heat, of toil and sickness, of seeking our sustenance, of carking and caring, of suffering affronts, or spending our whole life in a sordid and laborious drudgery? What a misery would it be, if one were to be a porter, another a husbandman, a third a smith, a fourth a servant, and this for a term without all end or respite? Many that were notoriously wicked sought death, and made away with themselves, merely to avoid these inconveniences. At least let us not dread it, that it may be a passage to future felicity, and for both these respects, let us patiently accept it. When God beheld us involved, by the sin of Adam, in such a labyrinth of woes, He, in His most indulgent clemency, invented for our good the device of dying, that our calamities might not be perpetual, combining in the same thing a penalty and a benefit, justice and mercy. Therefore because death is so great a good, so proper and secure an effect of His goodness, He would not have it liable to man's free-will, or the hatred of an enemy. For although it be in any one's power to

bereave thee of life, nobody, not even the uncontrollable violence of Kings, can bereave thee of death. This is the property of things of the best quality, to be out of the reach of human power, and not to be obnoxious to another's pleasure. If one were entangled in any one danger or incumbrance, it would be no small content to find a means how to evade it; why do we then grieve or dread death, which is the gate whereby we may rid ourselves of the hazards and incumbrances of this life. Many, for a mere punctillio of worldly glory, have sought and coveted it; at least, for the glory of Heaven, let us not fear it.

O immortal God! Who wast born not to live, (for Thou wast life eternal, as now Thou art,) but to die a most mortal and bitter death for me; why should I, that am mortal, be unwilling to die, to live a vital, eternal, and most pleasant life with Thee, and for accomplishment of Thy will? Since the desire of a Christian is to be with Christ, I know not why he should not desire death, since but by it he cannot come to that fruition. What misery can death bring, or what happiness can it bereave him of, who is not besotted upon the world, but hath placed all his felicity in Heaven? But besides this ocean of content, which flows from the sight and fruition of our Beloved, it hath moreover this advantage, that it puts us out of further danger of offending God. Death then is not evil, which takes away all evil.

But if it be evil, and an enemy to mankind, why do not men treat it like an evil, and as one would treat an enemy? I wish we would proceed in this manner with it, and deal no otherwise than with a foe, forecasting that we carry nothing about us which he may make booty of, or give him cause of

triumphing over us. Soldiers are wont to secure their provisions and baggage, or else quite spoil them, that they may not be serviceable to their enemies. We must leave no plunder for death; but if there be anything subject to its rapine, it must either be wholly abandoned, or sent before us with a safe convoy to Heaven, where all will be thoroughly secured. We must keep no spoils about us in which it may glory, but the luggage of our flesh; and we must extenuate it by fasting, labour, and other penances, that he seize it not entire. If death be evil and adverse to us, let us resist it, and object a buckler, by relinquishing things and all affection to them, that its wounds may bite the less upon us. If death be evil, let us make it good by doing good. Why should we dread death more than ourselves, since it cannot be worse than we are evil? Yea, it is we that make it bad, because we do not become good. Let us do this now when we have time, and may do, what we shall wish at its hour we had done, and cannot. A little respite only remains for labour, and in comparison of eternity not so much as an instant. Behold now so many years of our life are past, and those which remain are no longer.

But death is not evil in itself, but rather good; and we should be very good if we did imitate it, and practised what it puts in use, by despoiling ourselves of all things; so that if nothing were grateful and delectable in this world, it would be pleasing and savoury to our palate. He only needs fear death, who loves other things and not Christ. He is not a faithful servant who refuseth to appear in the presence of his master. If I did love Thee, O Lord, I should not have such a horror of death; for I should rejoice to behold Thee face to face, and cast

myself into Thy embracements, and because Thy will were accomplished in me; otherwise I play but the hypocrite when I daily beg that Thy will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Thy pleasure was to die, not that we might be immortal in this mortality, but that we might die well, by leading a better life. Grant me grace, that, as Thy will is to be fulfilled in my death, though against my will, so I may will and fulfil it in a good death, by a better and more perfect life.

I give Thee thanks, O most benign Lord, for this benefit of death, as Thy Wisdom hath disposed it: I give Thee thanks that I am to die, and that I know not when, or where, or how I am to die. The certainty of death is good and comfortable to me, it being a secure passage to bring me to Thy sight, and rid me of the miseries of this life, and make me despise its deceitful and counterfeit goods. What man, if he have but any one grain of wit, although he were sure never to experience any adversity, but were to be successful in all the contingences of this life, would not contemn it and all its goods, since he must needs see that he is to quit them all in death, which is wholly unavoidable. In which moment all past joys, all present goods, now to be relinquished, are no more than if they never had enjoyed a being; nay they are less conducible, for their very relinquishment will prove a torture. That only, which man neither loves nor possesseth, will not afflict him in that hour of affliction. The uncertainty also of the manner, place, and time of dying is acceptable to me, that I may more certainly serve Thee, O God, in all requisite manner, time, and place, as Thy worth and dignity doth require. This is a divine disposal, which breeds in us a certain solicitude of a better life,

by reason of the uncertain condition of a contingent death.

I am thoroughly persuaded, O Lord, that I know not whether I am worthy of love or hatred, and how it will fare with me after this life; neither do I covet to know, because it is expedient for me to be ignorant of it, according to the ordainment of Thy Wisdom. But I will not, therefore, more dread death than desire Thee, and confide in Thy mercies. I accept most willingly its great uncertainty; this being most certain, that it is enough for me that Thou art most merciful, and a cordial lover of me, and both canst and wilt save me, if I but humbly trust in Thee. What imports it, that I know not how, and when, and where I am to die, if I be assured that thou diedst for me, and diedst the death of the Cross, and at noon-day, and betwixt two thieves, upon Mount Calvary, to clear all doubt of Thy love towards me, that I may fully confide in Thee? Of myself, O Lord, I am able to do nothing, neither to live well nor die well; but by Thee I can do both, I hope for both, and will effect both; and if I have not lived well, Thou hast given me a desire, O Lord, to become truly penitent, and I hope by Thy means to amend henceforth my future life; why then shall I not also hope to die well? My hope will not be entire, nor my confidence sufficient, if I hope the one and despair of the other. I both have been, and am, an enormous sinner; but is it not perchance in Thy power to dispose of Thy creature as Thou thinkest best? Thy desire is, O Lord, to save me; Thou wilt, I know, be merciful to me.

CHAPTER LXI.

That man must give himself to God for His benefits.

Among all gods there is none like Thee, O Lord, there is none according to Thy works. Thy goodness was sufficient to make me love Thee, why dost Thou force me with works and benefits? Thou createdst me when I had no being; Thou soughtest me when I was on the point of perishing; Thou foundest me when I was lost; Thou redeemedst me when I groaned under the curse of sin; Thou savedst me when I was condemned; Thou hadst patience with me when I was obstinately refractory to Thy commands; Thou chastisest me when I offend; Thou art indulgent when I plead guilty; Thou instructest me when I do amiss; Thou feedest me when I am hungry; Thou givest me drink when I am thirsty; Thou warmest me when I am cold; Thou coolest me when I am too hot; Thou guardest me when I am awake; Thou preservest me when I am asleep; Thou helpest me up when I arise; Thou rearest me when I fall; Thou supportest me when I sit; Thou holdest me when I stand; Thou carriest me when I walk; Thou entertainest me when I come to Thee; Thou bringest me back when I recede from Thee; Thou recallest me when I go astray; on every side, within and without, the ocean of Thy benefits surrounds me with a bound-

less inundation. That very thing, which I have not, I account my benefit, because Thou, O Lord, art the Giver, Who dividest according to each one's expedience and exigence, and deniest nothing but for our good. Whatsoever also Thou conferrest upon others, all that I reckon as a benefit done to me. Thou obligest me with so many good turns, that I cannot help but love Thee, O Fountain of Goodness, although Thou wert not good; yea, although Thou wert evil. Thou, O Lord, art in very deed so good, that although, in lieu of so many benefits as Thou hast conferred upon me, Thou hadst heaped so many injuries, I could not choose but love Thee. It is not needful to make me love Thee, to have been so beneficial, it is not needful to have loved me; Thou art so good, that although Thou didst hate me, I were to love Thee, and ought to love Thee more than all my lovers and benefactors, albeit Thou hadst been injurious and malevolous.

Why was it needful to overwhelm him with innumerable blessings, whom by one Thou extractedst out of nothing? Thou demandest nothing more of me than myself alone. I owe myself now to Thee for the first benefit, because by it Thou gavest me wholly to myself; why then dost Thou superadd so many more? Why, after the giving of me to myself, dost Thou over and above give Thyself to me? I myself, and all that is mine, am no trifling debt of Thine; neither have I anything besides myself; what I have I most willingly give, to wit, myself. But why wilt Thou enhance the debt which I am not able to defray, by giving Thyself? Go to, O infirm spirit! find means to discharge this also. Thou mayest restore God to God, if thou hast God. God seeks thee and whatsoever thou

possessest lawfully; neither canst thou lawfully possess anything but God. Possess God, and thou shalt possess thyself lawfully, and so be able to discharge both the benefits. God gave Himself to thee; for thou canst not give thyself to Him unless thou be thy own, and thou wilt not be thy own unless God be thine, for by having Him thou hast thyself; so when thou givest thyself to God, thou mayest also give God, Who becomes thine. But thou shalt neither have God, nor thyself, unless thou love God; for by loving Him thou possessest Him; and thou alienatest Him by not defraying the debt by which thou owest thyself to Him. Christ gave Himself to the end thou mightest labour to become Christ, if thou wouldst pay thy debts by giving thyself. For by so doing, thou wilt give Christ crucified a thousand times the day, while thou diest daily so often to the world and all its pleasures.

CHAPTER LXII.

That God alone is to be loved.

Thou committest injustice against thyself, O miserable man, if thou lovest those goods which cannot love thee, or men who can, at least, not love thee; and although they do, thou mayest well doubt of it, or they cease to do so. It is much better to love God, Who loves to His utmost, and without any stint, Who cannot but love thee, if thou lovest Him. O immense Goodness, why dost Thou love me, whom all creatures have reason to detest? Why dost thou covet to be loved by me, picking me out from among so many lovers of thine? Me, who am moreover unworthy to be ranked among the devils, to whose service I mancipated myself, insomuch that a peculiar and more raging hell is due to me for contemning Thee after so signal and shameless a manner, Who vouchsafedst to die for me, and not for the Angels?

It is but meet that I at length begin to love Him, Who from the beginning loved me without beginning, and loves me to the end without end, expecting from all eternity that I should love Him. I have loved some that love not me; now I will love Him Who loved me before I knew Him; Who being loved, never fails to correspond in love, and, by loving, forceth others to love Him: Whom to love, is the flower of virtue, and by Whom to be loved,

is the top of felicity. Why doubtest thou, O my soul, to love Him Who is forced to love thee faithfully, if thou love some, who perchance will love thee perfidiously. Thou wilt have but a hard bargain in loving goods, which, if thou hast a rival, do vex thee; or men, who, if they love any other, do make thee jealous. The love of God is free from all sorrow and care; that it loves others, will occasion thy joy; that others love it, will be thy heart's desire. This is the all-sufficing goodness of God, that it both loves and is beloved by all without any one's prejudice, either the lover or beloved, but with the great content of all. Other things are narrow-bounded and needy, they suffice not to love two, or be loved by two, without detriment to one party.

Settle not thy affection upon things perishable, for thou wilt daily perish in them without end. Settle it upon things eternal, that thou mayest live happily for all eternity, and contentedly in this interim till it commence. Quit thyself of all love of corruptible things, and thou shalt quit thyself of all the miseries which befall man. Thou who seekest to be happy by loving, why dost thou love things, which, by merely loving them, render thee miserable? Love Him, rather, Who will make thee fortunate even among the misfortunes of this life. Why dost thou love those goods whose fruition makes thee evil, whose desire makes thee unhappy? Why dost thou love men, whose non-correspondence makes thee angry, whose correspondence, ridiculous and effeminate. Fix rather thy love upon God, Whose desire will make thee good, Whose fruition will make thee happy. Love not those beauties which deform thee; but love Him, Whose love will render thee beautiful. It is a great fondness to

love those goods, the sole love whereof deprives thee worthily of their possession; and not to love that Good which from the very fact of loving you will enjoy. The goods which thou lovest are not thine, but thou theirs; wherefore thou art in want of them. God being beloved by thee, becomes thine; Whom, if thou lovest, thou canst not want, and only wantest Him when thou dost not love Him: by not bestowing thy love upon other things, God in Himself bestows them upon thee.

Why dost thou love a good which is needy of another good, and not that which abounds with all goods? When a good is loved which needs another good, the misery is augmented, not the want diminished. All the goods of this world are necessitous, none of them is all-sufficient by itself, but requires the adjunction of another. Love that Good which is so good in Himself, as to be indigent of no other good. All good things are good by goodness, and consequently all stand in need of it to make them good. Goodness sufficeth of itself, and requires no additional consort: if thou lovest it, thou wilt both be good and happy. Love Him alone, Who alone is all things. Do not love those goods which covet not to be loved by thee; but love Him, Whom all things covet to love; thy Creator, Who both loves thee and covets to be loved by thee, and created all good things for thy sake. It is a kind of absurd stolidity not to love God Who covets to be loved by thee, and to love a piece of clay which hath no such resentment. Why art thou so inquisitive after what may please the eye and delight thy palate, and art so insensible of what doth perfect thy will?

Love is squared out only according to the rule of God, and therefore it suits no other line, nor

doth it acquiesce in anything else. The shoe of Goliah will never exactly fit the foot of Zaccheus. Love is the first gift; to whom is it due but to the first Good and prime Benefactor? Love is a gift by itself; on whom is it to be bestowed but on Him Who is good by Himself? Love is a gift by its own nature, to whom is it to be offered but to Him Who is good by His own nature? Love is a gift which is the source of all other gifts; to whom is it rather to be consecrated than to that Essence of good which is the Source of all essences? Love of itself, without the access of other gifts, is acceptable, and others without it are little pleasing; to whom doth it square better than to God, Who of Himself is amiable and pleasing, and without Him nothing must be pleasing? O Lord, how can I love Thee worthily, I being not able to afford Thee any competent service? All things are Thine; and whatsoever I have it is from Thee, becoming, as it were, a servant to me. Thou Who lovest me as much as thou art able, grant that I may love Thee more than I am able.

CHAPTER LXIII.

That self-love must be rooted out.

To the end thou mayest love and honour God as it behoves thee, it is not enough not to love thyself and the world, but thou must hate thyself, and esteem thyself the meanest of creatures, and an object provoking all their hatred. When a ship sails too much on one side, the mariner's ballast it to the other. Thou dotedst on thyself in an extremity of love, now thou must change it into an extremity of hatred. To be able to improve one's leap to the best he must go back some paces, and take his race from a further distance. To be able to approach God with a more impetuous love, yea, to be able to love thyself truly and rationally, thou must gather force from self-disdain. A racer is so much nigher the goal the further he leaves the stand behind him: and thou shalt approach the nigher to God, the further thou recedest from thyself. Thou must depart from thyself to come to God, the final end and conclusion of all things. Thou hast no greater opposite than thyself: thou must be at a deadly enmity with thyself, because thou art more than a deadly enemy to thyself: thou art more offensive to thyself than all the world besides. We resent an affront more feelingly at the hands of a friend than of a stranger, because it happens beyond expectation: it will

sound more ill-favouredly and relish more rankly of hatred, that thou shouldst be thy own undoer, who oughtest to be furthest from any such thought. We take it ill if we suffer any bodily hurt from an enemy, and worse if from a friend of whom we expected protection: how can we brook it patiently if our soul be endamaged, and that by ourselves and our own exorbitances? It would vex us to the heart to have our bodies enslaved, though to a great prince or potentate; and we have no difficulty at all to enslave our mind to a vulgar creature, or base dung, when we are passionately troubled for any affront, or injury, or loss. Oh, what a burden and discredit are we to ourselves! Shame and discredit follow those properly that do amiss; trouble and burdensomeness those that suffer: both these miseries attend our condition. We are evil towards ourselves, and we suffer evil from ourselves: we are a misery to ourselves and unmerciful, violent and violated, proud and base-minded. Oh, how pitifully pitiless and mercifully merciless are we to ourselves when we soothingly compassionate our follies, and take not revenge upon them. Commiseration and self-love in such a case is all one, as if out of compassion one should cherish a frozen snake in his bosom, which, being revived, will kill the benefactor with its poisonous sting.

Most evident it is, that in all reason we ought to carry a greater spite and deadlier feud to ourselves than all our enemies. And forasmuch as concerns self-affection, the less it mades thee regard the glory of God, and comply with His holy will, and seek the advance of the Divine honour, thou oughtest in all reason to be more immeasurably cruel against thyself than against any enemy, or the whole camp

of hell; although in effect, and in the exterior maceration of thy body a discreet mean is to be held, according to the direction of thy superiors and ghostly father, and the prescript of right reason; to the end that in this also thou mayest seek God's greater glory, for Whose sake it is expedient not to be immoderate in chastising thyself; as, for the same reason and our own salvation, we are forced to pardon our other enemies, and afford them a place in the list of our charity: for that which God exacts chiefly of us, and wherein we ought to take revenge of ourselves, is the death of our will, not of our body. And according to this, I say it is most evident, that thou hast more reason to be displeased with thyself than all thy enemies and ill-wishers whatsoever. Suppose a man, who had many capital foes who sought his life, were delivered into a strong and safe castle, there to be kept and defended by his intimate friend, one assured to him by all the ties of alliance and friendship, who alone were both esteemed and should be most faithful to him; and that there were no sanctuary elsewhere for that man, nor place of refuge; and that it were in that friend's power to let no enemy hurt him nor wrong the least hair of his head, unless he did introduce him thither, and deliver to him the keys of the castle, giving his consent by subscribing letters with his own hand. If he who ought to be both faithful and friendly should prove so perfidious as to unlock the gate to all his persecutors, and give them entrance, with intent to let them abuse him, wrong him, and exercise the utmost of their cruelty upon him; and he himself, moreover, who ought to shield him, should be more raging and malicious than the rest, should impede any benevolence that were intended him, permitting nothing

good, nor conducing to his health, to come to his hands which he intoxiated not first with poison or some other noxious ingredient; against whom then ought this miserable man to conceive a spleen? Against some one of his enemies, or that friend and ally, who proves so treacherous, whose malice alone is equivalent to all the rest? it being certain that without him all their hatred would have availed nothing at all. What an incredible brand of perfidiousness, cruelty, and inhumanity, would fall upon that man! he would incur the detestation of all, as being much more blameworthy than all. O most beneficent Truth! Thou hast committed my safety only to my own trust, as who would be trustiest to myself; but I prove most dangerous above all others. Devils, men, hell, and the world, all of them are my sworn enemies; but they all remain disarmed, if I myself do not arm them; they all will be innocent, if I to myself be not nocent. All the prejudice I can receive is within the reach of my own power, neither can anybody really hurt me but by my own permission, unless my will be such, unless I betray myself. I alone am the architect of all the injuries which befall me from others, though I impute them falsely to others. I stop the influences of God's beneficence, I hinder the effects of His gifts, I infect His graces and corrupt His virtues, abusing both the one and the other; how then shall I flatter myself who am so burdensome to myself, how shall I cherish and soothe myself, who am such a mortal enemy to myself? All the hatred I can vent is not equivalent to my own injuriousness. How often have I cheated myself, how many faults have I contracted? I have defrauded myself of Heaven, I have neglected the blessings of God's grace; and, not to number

up all my spiritual losses, which are without number, what pensiveness of heart, what affliction of mind, what disasters in my goods, what losses in my temporals, how many bodily diseases, contempts, revilements, derisions, have I brought upon myself, by the disordinateness of my passions, by my little circumspection, and by following the gust of my appetite? If, just occasion being given, any one contristate me, I am highly offended; and why am I not so with myself, since upon all occasions I am injurious to myself? If thou, O lying man, hadst but once catched one in a lie, thou wouldst never trust him afterwards; and having so often belied and cozened thyself, thou yet trustest thyself, and art not at all suspicious of thy proceedings.

But why do I recount my own injuries? It is a sufficient motive to make me abhor and prosecute with a pious hatred whatsoever is mine, for that all have proved as so many obstacles to retard my endeavours in loving God. O most holy and faithful Truth! I ought to loathe and hate myself for being so wicked and disloyal to myself; how much more more for being wicked and perfidious to Thee? For my own sake it behoved me to detest myself; how much more, O Lord, for Thine? Because I loved not myself orderly, I should in reason have hated myself; how much more because I loved Thee not at all, Who alone should be loved in all? I loved not Thee, because I knew not how to love myself; yea, I loved not myself, because I loved not what in reality I was, but something else less considerable. I loved not my soul, which is my chief and noblest portion; but only my body, as if I were nothing but it, which is absurdly false: for I have also a soul, for whose ransom the Son of God laid down His life. To love a part of myself,

I loved not my whole self; and, what is more to be lamented, I loved not that which to me is all in all, God my Saviour.

If thou be carried with a zeal towards God, O perfidious man, thou canst not but be fraught with hatred towards thyself; I permit, that so far as thou hast prejudiced or wronged thyself, thou be indulgent to thyself; there remains yet sufficient cause of self-revenge for not loving God and for transgressing His commands. Thou art not a little moved when thou hearest the perverseness of Caiphas and the treachery of Judas, and the very naming them puts thee into choler; why then wilt thou be partial and soft-natured to thyself? Tell me, O proud spirit, if thou hast but one dram of true humility, that is of truth, dost thou not hold thyself the worst of all sinners? Nay, this is nothing extraordinary, since St. Paul framed no better conceit of himself. Wherefore thou must deem thyself the perversest of creatures; and, when thou hast done so, thou proudly rankest thyself above thy degree. Nevertheless, I demand of thee, if thou holdest thyself such, then by consequence, worse than Judas, or Caiphas, or any other. But if thou judgest so in very deed, proceed consequently, lest thou be taxed and derided by the Angels; and either out of love, or hatred, or zeal, take severe punishment of thyself as being the ringleader of all that crew. Consider now out of this, whether the sin of Judas, and those of Antichrist, deserve love: yea or no? If God had committed to thy charge the doing justice upon him who gave Jesus that injurious blow, or him that spit first in that face on which the Angels love to gaze, or on the accursed Arius and Nestorius, or the malignest of men, Antichrist, or the father of lies, Lucifer; to punish

condignly their sins, as justice and equity should dictate to thee; how wouldst thou carry thyself towards them? Wouldst thou perchance soothe and flatter, and seek to humour them to thy ability; or rather strive to show in the sight of all creatures, how much the glory of God and His honour, so often violated, were prevalent to a just revenge? Thou oughtest to exercise no less severity against thyself, for thou must needs hold thyself worse than any of them, if thou makest not a counterfeit estimate of thy own baseness; and I suppose thou intendest not to cozen either God or thyself. It behoves thee to be moved with a more severe and fruitful indignation against thyself, than against the perversest of devils. The devil committed one sole sin, and that in thought only, for which he incurred eternal damnation; thou hast committed innumerable, and those of fact also. He sinned against God, to Whom his obligations were not so binding; for an Angel did not become God, nor did God suffer torments for them. He did not at any time pardon them, as He became Man for thee, shedding His most precious Blood for thy sake, sealing thy pardon, and ready to seal it for the future, not seven times only, but seventy-seven and more. Consider now, whether it would be accounted laudable to contract familiarity with that great prince of devils, and seek his honour and content in all? Why holdest thou too strict a friendship with thyself; desiring thy honour, procuring thy ease, and seeking thy will and pleasure in all? I demand of thee once more, if God should deliver into thy hands that malign spirit who hath so often deceived thee, tempted thee, and induced thee to sin, misleading thee from the way of salvation; and then another who were less hurt-

ful, commanding thee to punish both according to the qualities of the losses wherewith they damnified thee: against which wouldst thou be more cruel, against him that were less noxious, or the other who proved thy heavier enemy? But how canst thou be more indulgent to thyself, thou being more insolent towards thyself and more pernicious, I do not say than the worst of these devils, but than both, since neither of them could endamage thee in the least, unless thou co-operatest and gavest consent? Thou hast often played the seducer and enemy to thyself; thou hast often tempted and proved a stumbling-block of scandal to thyself; I know not then with what eyes thou canst look upon thyself, thou being more prejudicial and a greater undoing to thyself than Caiphas, Arius, Antichrist, or Lucifer. O soul, I conjure thee by the love of Jesus, to consider these things, whether they be not true. If it be true that thou art a greater cross and loss to thyself than the accursed Lucifer could have been, love not thyself disordinately, if thou be touched with any sense of promoting the honour of God or amplifying His glory. For by how much thou swellest with the tide of self-esteem and self-affection, by so much, in order to the effects of grace and virtues, doth God flow into thee at a lower ebb; and by how much thou drainest thyself of thyself by an humble self-hatred, so much the more will God replenish thee with His waters of grace, even to a great profundity. Who then is a greater enemy to thyself than thou thyself, who wilt not let God be exalted in thee?

But if thou wilt not hate thyself, O unworthy man, more than the rest of thy enemies, at least look upon thyself as upon an enemy, and bear thyself as little good-will, nor take too much com-

placence in that fit of self-prosperity and corporal delight. When any adversity befalls him whom thou owest a spite, thou art not a little contented therewith; and so must thou proceed with thyself. When thy enemy is slighted or derided it causeth joy and complacence in thee; and so must it do when thou thyself art so treated. One will not make much of an enemy, nor feast him at a table of delights; neither must thou do so with thyself. One would always be vexing and molesting an enemy, sitting close upon his skirts and taking all occasions of revenge; so must thou also do if thou wilt act that part, for this is properly to be spiteful. If thou dost not hold this tenour, thou art pitifully seduced, as thinking thyself not sick of self-love. Where God's Divine pleasure interposeth not itself, thou must with a masculine courage, for His greater glory, kill all self-affection in thee. Yet, out of the same motive, in the practice of exterior austerities, one must permit himself to be guided by some discreet person zealous of the Divine honour, that so he may also offer in sacrifice an oblation both of his will and judgment.

Yet thou must not frame such a conceit, as if the life of self-denying people, and those that loathe and persecute themselves, were harsh and insupportable; yea, of all others it partakes most of joy. The love of God is much more light-hearted than is self-love. If self-hatred brought no other advantage besides loving God, that were sufficient. It is much more available that God love thee ardently than that thou love thyself. God can be much more advantageous to thee, and He takes content in communicating joys, to give us a foretaste of His inebriating and beatifying sweetness, comforting us amidst the troubles of this life, and

recreating us, by exhibiting an experiment of His deliciousness. The Apostles went rejoicing from before the face of the council, because they were made worthy to suffer a contumely for the name of Jesus. Call to mind that admirable but true saying —Deem it all joy when ye fall into several temptations. God could draw relief for the children of the Babylonian furnace from their very flames, and turn their scorching heat into a refreshing dew; He is also able to make adversities no ways burdensome. Furthermore, if we rejoice in their evils whom we hate, thou wilt do no less in the miseries which befall thee; and since thy crosses are much more numerous than thy crowns, there must necessarily be more frequent occasions of joy than self-love could ever minister. Incommodities are always ready and at hand; commodities rare, and long to be sought for: wherefore he must needs have frequent occasions of rejoicing who rejoiceth in his adversities, since he shall never want matter of suffering in this life. Evil things are not so obnoxious to casualties as good. The fruition of good things is said to be casual, because they happen casually and but seldom: so doth not the multiplicity of evils; wherefore his joy will suffer less interruption who joys least in worldly solaces. Oh, what a content is it to disburden oneself of himself, and to live exempted from all importune and carking care of self-seeking interest! I conceive that he who hath quitted and relinquished himself, hath evaded in greatest part the miseries and vexations of this life.

Neither is it a mean fruit of a serious and sincere hatred of ourselves, that it causeth us to love others. Consider how insolent and powerful an enemy self-love is; it hath so much of the tyrant, that it

entrencheth upon charity, and, outing it, supplies its functions both towards man and God Himself, it alone consuming and devouring all the affection intended for both. He that loves himself disordinately, knows neither how to love God nor his neighbour. He that truly hates himself, will love even those that annoy and persecute him; he will rejoice if any one do wrongfully oppress him, knowing that to be depressed in him which is his main obstacle and opponent, and ought in all reason to be hated and persecuted by him: and since no body takes it ill, if one jointly together with him molest and infest his deadly enemy, but rather holds him worthy of thanks; so he, that is a hater of himself, will rather love than be otherwise affected towards one that lends a helping hand to persecute him.

Another and no sorry fruit of self-hatred is, that it makes us detest sin. All that viperous brood descends lineally from self-love, which is the parent and nurse of all vice and concupiscence, and from it all the rest of that gang derive their pedigree. He that rejoiceth at an injury, will not offend by being angry; nor he that covets to be contemned, by pride; nor he by impatience who esteems himself worthy of all punishment. It is no mean fruit that it removes all impediments in the love of God; it is no small benefit that it subdues thee in thyself, and puts thee in a full and peaceable possession of thyself. Lastly, if thou wilt know what huge advantages arise from self-hatred, thou must consider how much grace surpasseth sin, and virtue vice: it is so much more excellent to hate oneself out of virtue, than to love oneself out of vice. If men, even to their utter undoing, hate those that have much less endamaged them than thou thyself;

thou who of all others hast been thy saddest foe, must out of the motive of virtue, praise, and recompense, do no less.

CHAPTER LXIV.

How we are to love our neighbour.

O AMIABLE Truth, grant that I may love Thee above all, and all others for Thee: give thyself, and not riches nor deceitful goods, unworthy of love, to my friends and all those whom I wish well. Learn, O infirm spirit, to love creatures without being injurious. Many times the manner of loving stands parallel with that of hatred or contumely. Thou wilt do a friend whom thou lovest a great injury, if thou wish him riches as a real and solid good; for by so doing, thou showest thyself to love them better than him; for them thou lovest as being all-sufficient, him as needy: wherefore thou wilt rather choose to want him than them. Hence fortune is the umpire of friendships; and its vicissitude is the death of love, and birth of treachery. Hence an equal danger ariseth to sincere fidelity, whether thou lovest thy friend for riches, or riches in thy friend. As it is a like characteristic of true friendship, when thou lovest all for God, and when thou lovest Him alone in them, because He is the object of thy love. Thou wouldst love nothing else but God in all, if thou lovedst nothing but Him. This must be the touchstone of thy love, to try whether it be true charity or no. He that loves not riches at all cannot love them as good to another. Let God be the common benefit which thou intendest to bestow upon all; Whom alone if thou give, thou wilt make

them rich enough. And be sure to regard more such benefits in which thou lovest all, than such by which thou shalt be loved by all; for he, that loves all truly as it behoveth, shall be saved; but he shall not therefore be saved because he is loved by all.

We must not be so base-conceited of love as to hold it saleable at any rate: it must always be given gratis. He sells God, who bestows a charity upon another out of any other motive than charity: for God is Charity. Cast thy courtesies into nobody's dish; but as thou esteemest whatsoever is conferred upon thee by others, as a blessing coming from God, and thankfully attributest it to Him alone; so must thou esteem it God's blessing, not thine, whatever thou impartest to others: yea, reckon it a greater one, that He would be pleased to use thee for His instrument and almoner in dividing His benefits. Ground thy love towards others not upon temporal motives, but spiritual; for that foundation which is laid upon them, and not upon the Holy Ghost, is covetousness, not charity; not love towards man, but list and lust of creatures. In like manner, be as forward in doing good offices to others, as thou wouldst have God to be towards thee: proceed upon no other terms with others than He doth with thee. Grant, O Love of loves, that I may love all as Thou lovedst me and all: grant that I may love all for Thee, and that none love me for myself. I could rather wish, if it might be done without sin, that each one should hate me rather than love me, if they would love me for myself: for if each one did hate me, I should have but my due; if they loved me for myself, I should usurp what is Thine. All that love is impure which is not purely for God.

The sole love of God is sincere and refined from all dregs, since it neither mixeth itself, nor suffers mixture with contrary affections. Other loves are wont to occasion either envy, or anger, or hatred against the party beloved or some other. The love of God is immutable and eternal; other loves are flitting and fleeting. Therefore I shall reckon it among my gains to be loved for Thee, my God, and not for myself.

CHAPTER LXV.

That nothing is to be coveted but what God willeth.

Which is more conform to reason, that thou by conformity subject thy will to the Divine, or that it, servant-like, become conform to thine? Wilt thou perchance be so self-conceited as to think, that thou either art better than God in thy wishes, or more sound in giving advice? Remember how often thou hast preferred evil before good, how often thou hast stood in thy own light; and, on the contrary, what a sure and certain proof hath God given of His good will. Was it perchance a sinister will, to become Incarnate for love of thee? Was it such, to remain with thee in the ever Blessed Sacrament? Was it such, for thy sake to embrace death? Lo, it is one and the self-same will which hath done all this for thee, and which now orders that thou suffer this affliction, trouble, grief, or injury. He ordains both out of the same motive of love, and for the same end; attending with much solicitude what will make most for thy good. But if it made well for thee, that God deigned to suffer

torments, want, and ignominy, that thou mightest not suffer them; thou must also persuade thyself, when He calls thee into the lists of suffering, that it is very expedient, and will prove for the good and advantage of thy soul. That most excellent act of His will which made Him become Man for our sake, merited thoroughly at our hands a preparation of mind to undergo some hard task, if He should think it expedient; why doth it not also merit, that we be conformable to Him, since He covets nothing but for our good? It was our duty to suffer much, that in something at least we might comply with His will; we seeing it now accomplished in much, why shall we not willingly suffer somewhat? What canst thou wish better than to wish and have what is best? And this alone is that which He, thy God, Who is best both in Himself and to thee, wills and covets? God is infinitely powerful, infinitely wise, infinitely good and benevolent: He loves thee far more than thou dost thyself; He desires far more and seeks thy good; He knows much better how to compass it; He is of force to remove all obstructions, and to effect what is conducing to that end: what is thy meaning then, when thou takest on and grievest for some cross event, when thou repinest at some malady, wrong, vexation, misfortune, whether appertaining to thyself or another, whether public or private? Doth God err and be deceived, or doth He afflict us out of envy and malice? Did His omnipotency fall short, that He could not go through with what He intended, to avert this which thou deemest a loss? It happened not through any weakness in God, or malice, or deceit, but out of His power, providence, and immense goodness: why dost thou reject and seek to annul what the Divine

attributes ratify and make the subject of their employment?

Put thyself into the hands of God, that He Who created thee to His glory may conduct and govern thee; He orders all to this end, and without all doubt will bring thee thither unless thou frustrate His designs. Covet not to be governed according to thy own fancy. He that makes a journey by sea takes not upon him to steer the ship, but leaves that entirely to the pilot; and when a storm ariseth, then is he most tractable, and will neither do nor permit anything to be done contrary to the other's appointment. Dost thou hold God less skilful in ruling the world than a pilot in steering his ship? What thou permittest then to a man who is to land thee safely in thy harbour, why wilt thou not permit to God, Who is to carry thee to the port of Heaven? God knows most exactly well how to manage His family, the world I mean; He needs not thy advice; leave all that care to Him, He will carry thee to the land of salvation.

God is either propitious or angry when He sends thee these crosses so disrelishing; if propitious, why wilt thou not acquiesce to thy own good, and add thy own suffrage to those things which make so much for thy advantage? If He be angry, thou must give way, if it be but to mitigate it. An angry man, if any contradict him, waxeth more angry; if nobody cross him he is presently calm: in like manner, God will be pacified, if thou not only hold thy peace and brook it, but also be conform and thankful. O senseless man, how darest thou say, I will not have this, or I will have that, when thou knowest not what will make for thy good? Why dost thou refuse to suffer crosses, injuries, and humiliations? Perchance thou hast forgotten that

thou art a sinner, or rememberest not that God can turn these afflictions and humiliations into instruments of glory? The hatred of the brethren, and that inhuman sale of his dearest child, occasioned safety to Jacob, and glory and a kingdom to Joseph that was sold; for although—

> Consuming envy made the brethren sell
> Their brother; to the just all falls out well:
> This is the work of grace, &c.,

as devoutly saith the great Alcuinus. God, in the heavenly chemistry of His beneficence, knows how to extract great good out of evil; and this is the chief art and master-piece of grace. Why dost thou repine at the loss of thy health or goods, or of any one's that concerns thee? For either they were to be laudably expended, and then God will accept of thy good-will in lieu of the fact, and will also augment the merit of thy patience; or to be sinfully wasted in riot and vanity, and then thou hast reason to congratulate with thyself, because such a stumbling-block of offence is removed out of the way.

Esteem thyself to stand in a superior degree to thy will and content, and that thou art created for much greater matters. Thou art not made to thy own glory, nor to enjoy thy own will or pleasure, nor to save thyself alone, nor to enrich thyself, nor advance thy fortunes, nay, nor only to enjoy God in His Kingdom: thy end is more sublime than all this; thou art, to wit, created to the glory of God, which was the butt and scope of His will and power in creating all things. Oh, how great an end! and it mayest thou compass by suffering, whether it be in ordinary labours or extraordinary torments. Thou art not thy own, but God's; nor born to thy-

self, but to Him: so neither must thou aim at anything but the glory of God and how to please Him, and that His will be accomplished in thee. That will only prove fuel for the fire of Purgatory whatsoever nourisheth in thee thy own will. Covet nothing, whether it be spiritual consolations or other gifts, though very holy, but what God coveteth above all; since He wisheth thee more happiness and sanctity than thou canst thyself; and by this means thou shalt enjoy, though it be not to be sought for, continual comfort. All the afflictions and miseries which annoy man in this life's intercourse consist in the will, because it stands not in a true conformity with the Divine. The hearts of men are disquieted either because they have not what they would have, or because they would not have what they have: wherefore, he that quits himself of all self-will, quits himself also of all trouble. He that stands parallel with God in willing or not willing shall possess perpetual joy, because he shall perpetually enjoy his wish: for that is always done, which God will have done, according to His order or permission.

CHAPTER LXVI.

That we must give no ear to our own will.

His triumph over himself will not be complete who conquers pleasure, unless he can master his own will. It is not enough to be rigidly severe against our senses, but we must carry ourselves also after the same fashion towards our soul and its free-will; neither must we debar ourselves only of unlawful pleasures but also of lawful desires; nor mortify only our flesh, but lose also our soul, that so we may gain it totally at long running. Both our flesh and our spirit have been found delinquents to Almighty God. It were a piece of injustice to punish one co-partner and quit the other; to fine the servant and let the master go scot-free. We must do justice both upon the flesh and the soul; not as many, who, contenting themselves with outward austerities, are not solicitous to reduce the interior. But since the soul is the prime criminal, she in the first place must smart for it; and there is no other way of sequestering her but in her will, by denying or cutting short whatsoever she likes or takes gust in. The soul, which hath been contemptuous towards God, is worthy of death; therefore it must die to its own will in all things, and suffer in that wherein it hath been delinquent. In nothing at all, neither little nor great, must it procure or regard its interest;

otherwise, if it be thus open-eyed, it is not to be numbered among the dead. Be mindful in nothing of thy own will. Do the will of God, do the will of thy brother, do the will of thy enemy and him that injures thee, rather than thy own, if it may be accomplished without sin. Thou wilt not arrive to a sufficient degree of mortification, unless thou resign and transmit thy will, not only to God, but also to man; yea, even to thy very enemies.

Be not too credulous in those things to which thy will is carried with an impetuosity without having regard to the rule of reason; but hold them all suspected, although they hold forth never so fair a show of good: they are for the most part but a mere officiousness or branchings of the sensual part, which the devil makes use of to cloak his craft. Let thy will seek the glory of God, and not grieve at the contempt of men; let it attend to and be sensible of the Divine pleasure, not thy own affliction: let it be wholly employed upon God, and it will find enough to do: let it learn to waive all self-content and proper gust, though spiritual. Although God relinquish thee to thyself in thy hardest pressures, in thy spiritual desolations amidst the very powers of darkness, assailed on all sides with tribulations and temptations, thou must still persist faithful, seeking no redress of comfort, being ready to sustain that shock, and any other inculpable calamity of thy soul, so long as God shall be pleased to continue it, though even to the Day of Judgment, or for all eternity. He that covets to serve God in truth must serve Him gratis, rather wishing and begging to be debarred of all comfort; deeming this abundantly sufficient, if he can but conserve that place of his soul, where God hath fixed His residence, pure and unblemished;

not permitting anything else to enter and appear there, as in the holy of holies. Thither must the High-Priest Jesus only find entrance. Some servants of God, who were deluged with a sea of comforts, obtained by prayer the shutting up of these heavenly sluices, and to be deprived of all sweetness: neither would they afterwards admit of any such infusions though from Heaven; for some have not been wanting who refused Angels for their comforters. For what great matter dost thou, in rejecting a corporal gust which will rather prove an affliction? That bodily solace which hinders Divine joy and sweetness of spirit is too afflicting: God deserves more at our hands than this. For Him thou must contemn all jubilee of spirit, and whatsoever is pleasing to nature and self-will. The service of a hireling is neither constant nor faithful. If thou serve God out of hope of comfort or relief, though it be spiritual, thou lovest not God Himself, and this comfort failing thee, thou wilt often become slothfully tepid. Hence it is that we are subject to so many mutations, that we are remiss, that we make small progress; for as mariners hope for the wind, so do we for the spirit of devotion and consolation, without which we are becalmed, and any adversity, like a contrary blast, beats us back: yea, we are much worse than mariners, who know how to make way with a side or adverse wind. Let us learn to advance forward even amidst oppositions, aridities, and tribulations. It imports not whether thou serve God for the sensibility of interior comfort, or for some corporal commodity, except that thy service comes off less freely; because thou sellest it at a dearer rate by requiring this gust of spirit. God is more valuable than thy gust: it is better to have God than joy; and yet where canst

Thou be, O most delicious and sweet-relishing God, and the spirit shall not exult, if Thou discoverest Thyself to it? Where shall Thy benignity display itself, and the soul shall not be replenished with excess of joy? But grant me that I may never wish my own joy, but that Thou mayest be it; never seek the gust of my own will, but the good pleasure and accomplishment of Thine.

O afflicted spirit, if thou wouldst never seek thy own content and comfort, how much content wouldst thou find! He that leaves house or land for God shall receive a hundred-fold reward: there is no equity that he who relinquisheth more should receive less. He that relinquisheth his own will and its content, shall receive a hundred-fold more in the same species for denying it, than if he had given way to it; for he doth the will of God, and shall deservedly receive a more ample recompense. The more thou divorcest thyself from all gust of self-will and interest, the more deliciously wilt thou relish the Divine will; a heavenly kind of taste and joy will be infused into thy heart. If God had made any one man so happy as to be in a perpetual fruition of his own will, no sooner said but done; and so powerful, as to be able to compass all his designs and that lawfully; yea, and were securely certain of the continuance of this power and good-hap: I am persuaded such a one would enjoy less content than another who followed his own fancy in nothing, but renounced it in all for the love of God. A certain contentive relish of the will doth accompany its fulfilling; and there is no content nor complacence greater than that which God hath in the performance of His will. If God should communicate to thee one drop of that delight of His will, which He imparts to those who only do

and desire His will, thou wouldst take incomparably more joy in a total denial of thy own, than if it were always accomplished; for he that enjoys his own will hath only the joy of a human will; but if he renounce it, to do the will of God, he will partake, mediating the grace of the Divine goodness, of the gust of the Divine will. To be always doing what one listeth is esteemed the height of human felicity; what will it then be to do what God listeth? Man's will is impure, it is accompanied with anxiety and sprinkled with the hyssop of unsavoury contrarieties; the Divine will is most pure, and in a continual possession of joy. Will and pleasure are one and the self-same thing in God, wherefore he that hath the former must needs have the latter. In God appetite is not distinguished from joy; in creatures it is much otherwise. In the elements, motion to a place is one thing, and repose in a place another; in the heavens they are all one. Light and heat in the fire are two things, in the sun and stars the self-same: so man's will and joy are things distinctly different, in God uniformly the same. Neither can one safely place his joy elsewhere but in the fulfilling of the Divine will and total renouncement of his own; for a man having then in wish and possession the Divine, is so privileged that joy inseparably attends him; for all falls out according to his heart's desire. Therefore it is no such sad business to stand at a defiance with his own will, to despoil himself of all propriety, and wholly deny himself in all. Nobody stands in such an utter abnegation of this, nor dies so entirely to it, nor renounceth so fully all self-interest, as do the Blessed in Heaven, who are without the least touch of willing or not willing; and, nevertheless, in such a rigorous mortification of it they find a

special gust, and live most contentedly. Why then dost thou refuse to deny thyself who seekest salvation in that Heaven where there is the highest self-denial? Train thyself up to glory and relinquish thyself. Persuade thyself that thou canst not be happy there, but by doing that which now thou esteemest a great unhappiness. Go to, then, and begin that which, if thou be saved, thou shalt never cease to prosecute. Do that, at length, which, if thou comest to a state of happiness, thou shalt do for all eternity. In that endless perpetuity of bliss thou shalt never seek thy own will, being for ever and ever not only conform to the Divine, but also transformed into it, through the ardours of charity.

Who is there that being thirsty, and having an earthen pot and it empty, had not rather have a golden one, and full of some sweet and refreshing liquor? Who is there that being ill at ease, and having a crazed body, would not rather choose to have one sound and robustious? Who is there that being dull of capacity, and doltish in conceiving things, would not covet the intellect of an Angel, and be as quick of comprehension as a Cherub? O man, why wilt thou not exchange thy unhappy, frustrable, diseased, foolish will for the will of God, infrustrable, joyful, and consummated in happiness? If thou desirest to understand as doth an Angel, which thou art not able to compass, why dost thou not desire to will as God willeth, this being within thy reach? He that will be always in joy let him ever seek it in himself nor for himself; yea, he must extirpate all private and created love; otherwise, whithersoever he flies, whatsoever he goes about, he carries lets and incumbrances along with him; yea, multiplies them; insomuch that the further he flies, and the more he undertakes, the

more he is entangled, being less capable of the repose he seeks. Who goes once astray from the right path, the further he goes, the more he wanders: how much the more a man busieth himself in choosing this or that, in order to joy or repose, the less shall he find it; because he is in a greater exercise of self-will, which is the cause of his disquiet and trouble, and makes him stray further from the way of joy and repose. A sparrow falling into a net, the more it struggles to free itself, the more it is entangled.

God is so good that an overplus of His goodness remains for a more capacious will than thine and all the Seraphim; why dost thou then straiten thy human will, busying it about thyself, as if in half of itself it could sufficiently satisfy the Divine goodness? If God be to be loved, there is no room left either for self-love or anything else. Take, O Lord, my whole love, take my whole will; nor let me slip this happy exchange, by which, for this my naughty one, I may own Thine, the best of all.

CHAPTER LXVII.

That we must continually be mindful of God.

How canst thou, O ungrateful spirit, be at any time unmindful of God, Who is so mindful of thee as if He were forgetful of the rest, and thou the only object of His thoughts; Who is always solicitous for thee and thine, registering in the table of His sweetest memory all the good thou ever dost? It is held a matchless favour if an earthly King be mindful of any one and admit him to his presence: and do I not esteem it an obvious favour that the King of Heaven never is forgetful of me, nor absent from me? A sick person is not a little comforted if any one give him a visit; and why doth not a sick and wretched soul exult with joy that her God hath her continually in His eye and Providence. If a Prince cast but once a favourable look upon his servant, it rejoiceth him to his very heart; and I, O Lord, am nothing moved though Thou never cast Thy eyes off me, nor divert Thy hands, being wholly taken up and busied in mercy towards me. Men run through haste to behold a temporal King as he passeth by; and I am slow in reflecting upon Thee, an Eternal King, being present and permanent with me. Men are solicitously curious to behold a monster, and stick not to give money for that end; and I, though gratis, care not to behold Thee, the beauty of heaven and earth, on which

the Angels themselves love to gaze. The Queen of Saba made so many days' journey to see the magnificence of Solomon and his Court; and I regard not Thee, my God, though so nigh me as to sojourn in my house. If my very slave gave me but a cup of cold water, I would look him in the face and deign him my countenance: and yet I will not look upon Thee, but desist from praising Thee, the Lord of Angels, Who art perpetually serving me in all, and replenishing all for my sake with Thy blessings. O Lord, Thou Who art so operative as to work all in all for me, why am I so useless in Thy behalf, as not only not to make Thee the subject of my action, but not so much as the object of my memory? O most loving God, how could I behave myself worse towards my capital enemy than I do towards Thee; not so much as deigning Thee a look when Thou meetest me, and meetest me so often, though Thou be still ingratiating Thyself by new favours and services.

Oh, how continually, O God, art Thou present to me, and yet I am so little present to Thee, and take so little notice of Thee! Thy essence penetrates each part of me much more entirely than the sunbeams penetrate each part and parcel of a transparent crystal, more perfectly than our soul is diffused through our body. The present assistance of Thy wisdom provides for me, and plays itself the purveyor, that nothing may be wanting; and if I do any good, that it may impart a reward: Thou committest not this to the intercourse of Thy Angels only and their relation, but Thou Thyself, becomest my overseer. Thy power carries me in Thy bosom, as a nurse or mother doth her dearest child. And because these duties, of being in me, of seeing me, of preserving me in my being, are necessarily annexed to Thy Divinity, Thou wouldst have me

engaged to Thee, O good Jesus, for a voluntary presence; and there being but one way wherein Thou couldst necessarily be absent, Thou didst invent a means even in that to be also present in Thy most holy Body, that Thou mightest be present with me both corporally and spiritually. O ungrateful soul, why wilt thou not be thankful to so loving a Lord? And if thou canst not bodily be always present with this Divine Sacrament, be not forgetful at least in spirit and thought of so beneficial a Sovereign, Who hath made Thee His tabernacle and place of residence.

Carry, O soul, respect to thyself and the altar of thy mind, where God dwells by grace, which thou perchance now partakest of, and woe be to thee if thou dost not, the Divinity being there communicated. We reverence inanimate things, and deservedly which are imbrued in the Blood of Christ; but why do we not the same to a part of our soul and spirit, where the Holy Ghost diffuseth Himself? We dare do no unseemly action before an altar where the sacred Body of Christ our Lord is kept; no more do thou dare before thyself, because thy mind, as thou mayest well hope, is by grace the altar and throne of God, He residing in it with greater pleasure than in a pyx of gold. How dost thou compose and recollect thyself when thou art to receive the Body of Christ? Habituate thyself always in such a modesty, such a decency, since God is thy Guest, lodging not in thy body only but within thy soul. If, the Body of Christ being thy Guest, thou compose thyself with such decency; thou must still retain the same, since the Spirit of God becomes resident in thy spirit, when the Father and the Son have come to thee, and taken up in thee Their dwelling-place.

Whether in public or private, comport thyself always after the same manner. God beholds thee, God is nigh thee, God is with thee, God is within thee. If Christ should come visibly to thee when thou art all alone in thy chamber, wouldst thou in His presence put thyself in any less seemly posture, or rather stand in a reverent, submissive, composed manner, trembling at the aspect of such an awful majesty? Behold the Divinity is always present with thee, and we owe it no less duties and respect. The Divinity is present not after one manner but many, by filling and surrounding thee with His boundless essence, as the ocean doth a sponge; by carrying thee in the eye of His all-seeing Providence, by sustaining thee by His power, by cherishing, embracing, and adopting thee for His child by His heavenly grace. O soul, why sendest thou thy desires in so long a pilgrimage, since God is so nigh at hand? Why dost thou aspire to other joys, He being present? Thou hast a speedy redress for all thy miseries, why art thou contristated? A refuge and sanctuary against all thy calamities is close by; what needest thou fear? Let all thy affection spend itself in embracing and kissing this thy most loving Parent, in Whose bosom thou art nurtured and brooded up. Consider thyself more nearly allied to God than to thy brother, than to thy father, than to thy mother: for the kindred and alliance betwixt thee and God is greater than betwixt a child and his parent. Let him then be always present to thee Who is present after so many ways. As a mirror becomes the image of that which is present to it, so a holy soul in some manner will become Divine, if it have the Divinity present with it.

This presence of God is the vital action of grace:

a holy soul is so long in an actual and waking exercise of life as it loves God and is mindful of Him, whether it be employed in the contemplation of His perfections, or seek actively to advance His greater glory. For as God is not only present to us by His essence and knowledge, but also by His power and operation; so the best method of framing the presence of God is by operation, by doing good works. Who will not become active on God's behalf, since He works all in all for ours? But yet, though a soul surcease from this, she will not therefore die by sin, but will be like one that is asleep, not dead, but yet scarce alive, as not enjoying the use of life: so a soul that is in oblivion of her God, though she be not void of life, yet she is in so sound a sleep that she reaps no benefit of her spiritual vitalities. Oh, how long-lived will one be that is still mindful of God! Oh, how many ages will he complete, which even those that otherwise are held spiritual do ordinarily forfeit! This presence of God is also the sense of grace, for without it the soul lies like one in a palsy. The palsy is a disease, not a death; but it deprives one's limbs of all sense and vital motion: life and grace are then to small purpose when the memory of God is benumbed and stupified, whether it be in action or contemplation.

One palm tree becomes fruitful merely at the presence of another; and the soul at the presence of God is loaden with all variety of fruit. Without the presence of the sun all is buried in obscurity, nothing doth partake of beauty; by the presence of God a soul is illustrated, and is made most comely. The elements cannot brook to be absent from their centre; and no less is a soul carried to her centre of repose, God. As a stone, if it be detained in the

air, keeps always a propension to the earth, and if it be left to itself tends thither without any more ado; so a soul enamoured upon God, even when it is detained from its repose, by reason of necessary occurrent duties either of life or state of life, even in that kind of violence it breathes with tacit but connatural aspirations after God: and, these employments being ended and she left to herself, she hastens to her centre, recollecting herself in her closest retreats with God, that to her utmost she may become like the Angels, who see always the face of their Father, and covet to see It more and more; which desire ought to be as connatural and recreative to our hearts as is the air which we breathe.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

That the incomprehensible goodness of God is to be loved.

WHAT am I, who am but an abyss of malice in comparison of Thee, O ocean of goodness, that Thou shouldst love me! Like loves its like; why then dost Thou, Who art the best, love me, who am the worst? Things more beautiful than themselves are loved by others: Thou, being most beautiful, covetest to be loved by me, the vilest and loathsomest of creatures. O Love of the world, what am I in comparison of Thee, who deserve to be the hatred and horror of the world? What is the reason that Thou commandest me to love Thee? Why was it needful to enjoin this? What necessity to entreat and solicit it by so many ways? O solicitation! O most sweet voice!—Child, give Me thy heart!

O petition iterated and re-iterated to deaf ears! Thou makest an exhibition of Thyself in each of Thy creatures, that Thou mayest be seen at all turns through the casements of nature, melting away in this most amiable demand, in Thy search after me. Thou accostest me in each creature, that Thou mayest beg it from them all; dividing out Thy love in so many ways to gain mine. What window soever I open, Thou as a suitor occurrest to my eyes, standing behind the wall, looking through the windows, looking forth through the grates. If I see, if I hear, if I smell, if I taste, lo, Thy lovely face presents itself, Thy sweet voice, the odour of my God, a honey-comb with Thy honey is forthwith at hand; everywhere suit is made for love. If four or five grave men should avouch anything, or invite others to an enterprise, each one would do and believe what they said: why give not I ear to so many creatures, while they all invite me to the love of my God? Since He hath so many vouchers of His comeliness, why am I so backward in belief? If men, allured by the beauty of things, thought them endowed with a deity; how much art Thou the Sovereign and aggregate of all beauties, more beautiful than them; for Thou, being the Source and Author of it all, allottest to each one the pittance it hath.

All creatures represent Thy love and beauty with silent cries and invisible colours. But what voice or portraiture will bring us to Thy knowledge? Creatures are not able to paint Thee forth. All the perfections they contain seem nothing else but so many blemishes. Who art Thou then, or where, O my beautifully fair? Who though Thou be everywhere present with me, yet I find Thee nowhere; and though Thou comprisest all, yet Thou art

none of that all. Creatures object themselves to my view as if they carried a resemblance of Thee; but I look upon them as a riddle. Thou art not that, O Lord, which they delineate Thee to be; who though they tell not a plain lie, yet they chalk Thee so forth, that Thou art not truly what they represent. In this manner I sought Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but found Him not. I will rise and make a turn about the city, through the lanes of nature and the streets of the heavens; I inquired of the forms of creatures, of the harmony of music, of the fragrancy of perfumes, the tastes of inebriating relishes, the embracements of lovers, and they all said, we are not thy Beloved: He shines in such sort that no place is capable of His splendour; He sends forth a sound, but such a one as no wind doth carry along; He yields a scent, but so as that no air disperseth it; He gives such a relish, that no hunger can bite upon it; He is so inherent, that no satiety can cause a separation. I inquired of the earth, and it made answer: I am not He; if the heaven of heavens do not contain Him, why art thou so inquisitive of me? I inquired of the sea, and it trembling said: I am not; His abyss much exceeds mine, and it is no ways to be waded through. I inquired of heaven, and it said: I am not thy God; He mounts much above my sphere. If none of all you creatures be He, tell me where I may receive some tidings of Him? The watchful Intelligences and Guardian Spirits of this world made reply: He made us; seek Him above us. When I had passed a little beyond them I found the Beloved of my soul, Whom I could not find among creatures. In this respect only I behold and find Thee, O Light placed in the midst of lights, that I am able neither

to behold nor find Thee! For how can I comprehend what is incomprehensible? Fly, fly, my Beloved! In this respect I will comprehend Thee, because Thou fliest me. I know so much the more of Thee, the more I know Thee not to be knowable; and I approach nigher to Thy knowledge, the more Thou recedest from my comprehension. I sought in my bed, and the retiredness of my solitude, night by night, the Beloved of my soul. The splendour of things beautiful in respect of Thee is a night; the seemliness of the heavens is a night; the very beauty of the sun, its refulgency, and any other, I will not say, created but falsely imagined comeliness, is a night. If each star were more resplendent than the sun, and the sun himself did by as many degrees exceed these stars, as there are sands of the sea and motes illustrated by the sun, he would be an eye-sore in respect of Thee, nor would be more conspicuous than the stars now are in presence of the sun.

But to what purpose do I bring forward these deformed beauties of visible things, these rustic forms even of the sun, and Ethiopian lights? Let us draw into comparison these spiritual and pure ones, whose loveliness is such, that an Angel appearing to the devout Father John Fernandez, of our Society, the sight so affected him that he fainted through excess of joy, and was not able to support himself; affirming that all the beauties of this world were but blemishes and deformities in regard of this. Imagine then that the comeliness of that Angel were as much greater than it is, as there are atoms in the air, and that each Angel were endowed with such comeliness; and there being millions of millions of them, or in a manner a number numberless, sum up all this comeliness of them all into one;

it would be ill-favoured and ugly in comparison of the beauty of God, and I say not would seem a mote, but a mere nothing. O my heart, why art thou not ecstasied with such amiableness, and set on fire with such an abyss of light? O my heart, thy hardness and heaviness is greater than one of iron, if this immense loadstone of love do not elevate and attract it.

But art Thou perchance, O Lord, that clarity and seemliness which I conceit, in regard of which so great light of the sun, or an Angel, multiplied to such an infinity, seems no more than darkness? No; but Thou art infinitely seemlier: nor after so great light do I see Thee, though Thou be most refulgent. I only know that that refulgency is not Thee, because compared to Thee it is darkness. But what a one Thou art is wholly unknown to me, Thy light dazzlingly blinding me: and the brighter it shines, it leaves me in greater darkness. But I never behold Thee more clearly than in this mist; nor do I find true day, that is the ancient of days, but in this night at noon-day, clear to me by reason of its obscurity and midnight. O Eternal Love, take now my heart and all my love. But why do I say take it, if Thou has forcibly seized it? Why commandest Thou me to give Thee my heart, if Thou hast already robbed me of it; not in one hair or one eye of Thine, but in my blindness and the hare-brainedness of my extravagances? Thou hast robbed me, because so great Thou art that I cannot discern Thee: Thou hast robbed me, because though I, so contemptibly dwarfish, have offended Thee, Thou so majestically great covetest to be loved by me. But Thou, O Lord, Who hast wounded my heart with Thy goodness, must out of the same pour into it the oil of Thy mercy,

that it may be a healing salve to the wounds of my sins.

O hidden God, if Thou, even in this ignorance of Thee be pleasing to me above all I know; what wilt Thou be when I shall know Thee intuitively, and face to face, in Thy clear sunshine? Seize and despoil me of my heart; take all my will and never restore it to me again; permit not a knife to be in the hands of a madman, but reserve to Thyself the management of it; for what remains for me in Heaven, or what do I covet besides Thee on earth? I rejoice that my heart faileth me, because Thou hast taken it from me. Let my heart be always upon Thee, because my treasure is placed in Thee. O truly God of my heart, because now Thou art Lord of it! But because Thou art mine, though my heart hath failed me, yet a better than mine will not: Thou wilt supply its room. Thou, O God, art my heart; Thou art that part which hath failed me. To wit, Thou shalt be my heart eternally, and therefore supply for the functions of my heart; Thou canst actuate my will for me, and provide what Thou knowest expedient on my behalf: it shall only be my task and employment to love Thee. Thou shalt love me instead of myself, that all my love may be wholly bestowed on Thee, in such wise that self-love may no way impede me. O happy loss of my heart, if God supply in lieu of it!

CHAPTER LXIX.

Of the superessential light of the most Blessed Trinity.

O MOST clear shining light of Divine Unity! if Thou be so great that Thou dazzlest the eyes even of the strongest understandings by Thy dim shadow appearing in creatures, and renderest them more purblind than the sunbeams do the owl; what an abyss of light will invest Thee in Thy Trinity, a shadow whereof is not afforded by creatures, but it was to be revealed by Jesus? If Thou be here so refulgent to our eyes, how will these splendours of sanctity, which never break forth, shine within Thee? If the shadow of Thy Unity be so illustrious, how radiant will the light of Thy Trinity be, which cannot be shadowed? O most lightsome darkness! when some clarity of such a mystery is communicated to a soul, that light is an obscurity, because a soul sees not itself, but is lost as in a maze. Like as one that walks in darkness and knows not where he is: so the mind, surprised in that light, is ignorant what becomes of itself; and having regained itself in that brightness, (which must needs be so, it being in God,) there it loseth itself because it finds God, which happens when being sequestered from the traffic of inferior objects, and becoming conform to Christ crucified by a constant mortification and crucifixion of its will, it fixeth an undazzled eye and humble mind upon the stupendous secret

of the Trinity; there it relisheth life in its original purity as in its fountain; there it admires the nature of a most simple simplicity in all points consonant with a Trinity.

When we know anything worth our admiration, we are touched with a pleasing desire of beholding it. What more admirable, and consequently more pleasing, than to know that most simple Unity into which the Trinity of Persons combines itself; as also that Trinity, which a most simple simplicity doth not destroy? Unity doth shine distinctly in the Trinity; the Trinity, forasmuch as it relates to what is within, is conspicuous in Unity. The Father is the source of the Son: the Son issues from the Father according to the distinction of a Person, and remains in Him according to the unity of essence: from the Father and the Son proceeds the Holy Ghost, and His substance remains both in Father and Son; where a Trinity hinders not Unity, nor Unity impedes Trinity: yea, where Trinity furthers Unity, and Unity favours Trinity. Therefore God is more one because He is also three.

What more pleasing than to see those things mutually conspiring, which seem repugnant to one another? There would not be in God the greatest simplicity imaginable unless there were the greatest efficacy; there would not be the greatest efficacy unless there were a Trinity of Persons; there would not be a Trinity of Persons unless there were an Unity of Essence. The Divine simplicity is so far from obstructing a Trinity, that both Trinity contributes to Unity, and a most united Unity requires a Trinity. Therefore the more simple God is in His nature, the more is He triplified in Persons; and as no greater simplicity is conceivable than that of the Divine nature, so there can be no truer

distinction than that of the Persons in that Unity. The more things partake of simplicity and purity, the more efficacious they are, according to the tenet of philosophers. Because fire shares more eminently of these two qualities, it is the most active among the elements; and upon this score, the heavens more than sublunary natures, and spirits than bodies. Virtue, the more it is united and condensed, the more forcible it is in its operations: and the more simple a thing is, the more it hath of the form, which is both its act and activity. Now in an infinite simplicity which is a most pure act, and a form the simplest of all others, as being most refined and remote from matter, there must needs intercede an infinite efficacy in the production of an infinite Person by the communication of an infinite substance from all eternity. My soul stands amazed while it contemplates this simplicity, and transported out of itself it adores this Divine perfection in the equality and eternity of the Persons: for the more simple things are, as they are more effectual, so are they also more perfect in themselves. Perfection is not taken from the matter but the form: wherefore the more anything partakes of the form, the more it also partakes of perfection; and, by consequence, as the simpler things are the more they have of the form, the more also they have of perfection; and for this reason Angels are more perfect than sensitive creatures. Seeing then that the greatest simplicity is the chiefest, sole, and total form or act, it must by good sequel be the most perfect; wherefore the Son of God is equal and co-eternal to His Father by reason of the immense simplicity of the Divine nature. Among men the father is greater than the son, because to make a creature capable of engendering, it is requisite that

he be in a perfect state; but since God from all eternity is immensely simple, He is from all eternity perfect, and consequently from all eternity generating, and the Father is not greater than the Son. Among men nobody is born a father. God from all eternity is Father, nor was He sooner God than a Father. Among men it is highly prized, if the son produced carry a resemblance with his father in the lineaments and features of his face and that child which most resembles him is most in his love: what a fecundity doth it intimate where the Son is produced not only like in accidents, but the same in substance? How great a subject of love where the Son so resembles His Father, that the Father is not more like Himself, nor more Himself; and after so great similitude the Son is only one, and begotten by one most purely: where the Father is a virgin and begets Him a virgin, and the Son not an infant, and born without a mother? Wherefore the Son doth not lessen affection as dividing it with a mother, there being none here, nor the Father with a spouse. But the Father loves intimately his only Son, and the Son loves intimately His only Parent. Where the Son is not begotten of a particle of His Father, but of His whole paternal substance. And whatsoever the Father beholds in His Son is His own and of Himself; and whatsoever the Son beholds in His Father, He knows Him to have communicated without envy or partiality. How can They choose but infinitely love one another, They being so infinitely One? While these and such like are after an ineffable but intelligible manner, by a profound silence thundered forth to a soul, and are made apparent to it; how can it choose but be all set on fire, when in so great light and with all its powers it shall be

enamoured upon that superessential and superexcellent perfection of Unity and Trinity, challenging all the Angels and Seraphim in that smoke, which replenisheth the house, arising from this furnace of ardent charity; and crying, Holy, Holy, Holy; flying thither with the spread wings of its heart, partly refrigerating this heat of love, and partly raising new flames.

But there chiefly it remains like one ecstasied, wholly inebriated with Divine love, when it considers that Ocean of goodness, wherewith an infinite nature is communicated to the Son, and those ardours of love in which is made the Procession of the Holy Ghost. Here a created Spirit is at a non-plus, and through excess of affection perisheth, as it were, in itself, becoming a prey both to fire and water: it is drowned in an ocean of so great goodness, it burns in the pile of that stupendous love. Nothing can be imagined more efficacious to convince and attract our hearts to a pure and sincere love of God, than that inconceivable goodness wherewith the Father communicates Himself to the Son, and both of Them to the Holy Ghost. Nothing can be imagined more devoutly, more tenderly, more sweetly affecting, than that outburst and excess of goodness in the eternal emanations. Nothing more cheerful, more pleasing, more delectable to a soul, than the Nativity of the Eternal Word. For if it be goodness in itself which is allective, and the booty which well-ordered love preys upon, that towards which the will is carried with all the poise of its affection, what greater goodness imaginable than that the Infinite Goodness Itself, Which according to the nature of good is diffusive, communicate not a part but all Itself entirely, not only what It hath but also what It is?

This profuseness of communication is a greater subject of admiration than any other infinite perfection of the Divine Nature. If a man had some new and outlandish jewel, or some other exquisite rarity, for which all esteemed him happy, and had nothing at all but it, that being the sum of his treasures; verily, though that pearl seemed strange to thee, yet this would seem much stranger, if he without any hopes of gain should give it gratis to another. The Divine Nature is an object of wonder; but will not this seem a greater wonder, that It should be gratis bestowed upon the Son by that admirable communication; and yet a greater than this, that It should be done after such a manner as still to remain in the Giver? Besides, if love be an argument of goodness, (for diffusion and communication never proceed but from love,) where can greater love be imagined than where all that is is love? Love seeks equality in the lover and beloved; and here is so great love, that the parties beloved carry not only a similitude but even an identity betwixt Them, insomuch that both Their loves are one and the self-same. From whence necessarily follows the greatest fidelity and joy conceivable, since they cannot choose but love and be beloved equally. This Their love is so efficacious and legitimate that, though the Father and the Son were not by Their eternal generation One and the same Nature, the Holy Ghost would make them such. This is the aim of charity, this is the function of love, to make the lover and beloved one; and since that love is of a God most infinitely perfect towards Him that is also a God, it must needs be most intense and wholly efficacious. But if it wrought not an Unity it would not be altogether perfect; but like the love of a thing limited and

towards a thing limited, not towards an infinite Only-begotten, equal to His infinite Father, where both the Lover and Beloved are infinite. Where there is such an excellent and genuine love, how much goodness must needs intercede! So that the Trinity is a most pregnant argument of an infinite good, and consequently of a Divine perfection, (that being good which is perfect,) as also of God's simplicity: wherefore the Trinity of Persons is an authentical testimony of the Divine Unity. What complacence doth a soul take in knowing this: not as I have rudely explicated it, or as it can be explicated; for this is only felt in an inexplicable manner; for as there are no natural species which can bring us to this knowledge, so neither are there words significantly expressive of what is manifested to some pious souls concerning the Word Eternal. Therefore the soul of a creature is so over-joyed when the mutual proportion and harmony of the increated Trinity and Unity, and the necessity of both to the accomplishment of the Divine perfection are communicated to it, that it is all in jubilee and exultation, transported beside itself, and quite spent through amorous desires and the languishments of true charity, thirsting earnestly to see more clearly in the other life this stupendous goodness of the Trinity.

Why longest thou, O my soul, to see anything else besides this great Spectacle of the world, for Whose sight alone the Seraphim and all the Hierarchies of Angels and Saints were created, and introduced into Heaven, as so many spectators? Where is thy curiosity, where thy desire of knowledge, if thou covet not to be dissolved and contemplate that mystery, and to dive into its hidden secret? But thy longing must remit thee to the other life, and not put thee upon inquiry in this, how He is Three and

One. Thou must not search the cause why He is so, since thou art not able to give the cause of what He is. Thou seekest in vain a cause in Him Who hath no cause. God were not to be styled great, if He were not greater than our capacity. Thou must not inquire after what manner He can be so, Who never could be before He was so. Philosophers could never sufficiently penetrate into the nature of divers worms, and nobody knows himself thoroughly; how then canst thou hope to make a full discovery of the Divine Nature and thy Author? Wherefore thou must captivate thy reason to the simplicity of faith in this supernatural mystery: for that perspicuity, which the Divine indulgence deigns sometimes to insinuate, belongs not to all, but only to whom God calls out of the number of those who dwell with His Son on Mount Calvary, and in a total renouncement of themselves; who, denying self-will, have taken up their Cross and followed Jesus to that Mount, and whom He will have follow Him thence to Mount Olivet and glory. These He privilegeth sometimes in such sort as to make them partakers of His majesty. Where I am, saith Jesus, there also shall My servant be. He that shall partake with Christ in suffering, shall also partake of His extraordinary light and joy. So when our holy Patriarch St. Ignatius had wasted and exhausted himself with corporal penances and austerities, it was more copiously and clearly imparted to him than one is able to express. So that mirror of fervour, Father Didacus Martinus, did almost always behold himself environed with a glorious light of the Trinity or some one of the Three Persons. Nevertheless, it appertains to all to covet with most ardent desires the sight of this ancient and eternal novelty in the life to come. It was revealed to that

holy servant of God, Father John Fernandius, that a certain Religious man of our Society was long detained in Purgatory, because he had omitted to wish with ardency the sight of the Most Blessed Trinity. O my soul, why art not thou more enamoured upon the sight of this Theatre of the Blessed, to Whose spectacle all minds are summoned, all rational creatures are invited?

What a joy will it be to behold that, which now by reason of the narrowness of our thoughts or ignorance, through an excess of jubilee and love, we are not able to comprise? How exultingly shall we rejoice while we contemplate these first-fruits of the Divine perfection, that foretaste and new expression of the Divine goodness where it communicates itself to the Son, and that primitive bounty of God? What a pledge and assurance will a soul receive of the Divine benignity towards itself when it beholds this profuseness of benevolence? If God, without deliberation, gave all that He is, will He not by the advice and vote of His goodness grant that we may at least see what He is? If He permit us not to be what He is, He will permit us to admire what He is; if not to possess Him, at least to enjoy Him; if not to live by the same life, at least by such another, and that eternal, of which a soul hath a pawn when it beholds a generation excluding death. How can we choose but love God with all our mind and strength, considering that purple morning of ardent charity, since the first and virgin dew of His gifts which He displays is the furnace itself of charity, love itself in the same substance; so that the love is as great as God, and in the same gift of love He gives His own infinite essence: for love itself is the first gift and all that infinite being which is in God.

What assurances of benevolence will a soul take hence, beholding such a happy and ominous essay of God's future bounty, and such a promising beginning of His goodness? Insomuch that it takes huge complacence in being loved by that unparalleled love, and doth what it can to love Him reciprocally, by imitating so great goodness, by giving itself to God, by leaving itself nothing, since the Father leaves Himself no parcel of His substance which He communicates not to the Son, and both of them to the Holy Ghost. In the excess of this consideration and the consideration of this excess, by means of a luminous darkness, there passeth an ineffable communication and intimate union betwixt God and a soul. The soul passeth into God by grace and love, which though she remain in herself by nature, yet not by affection; and God passeth into the soul by indulgence and charity, though He still remain in His majesty.

O immense goodness of the Father, immense wisdom of the Son, immense sweetness of the Holy Ghost, grant that I may reverence Thee in Thy Unity, adore Thee in Thy Trinity, admire Thee in Thy goodness, imitate Thee in Thy love; grant that I may humble myself to Thy superexcellency, that I may enjoy Thy vision, adhering to Thee through all eternity, becoming one spirit with Thee, and in this interstice an adorer of thy Majesty. In spirit and truth let me desire truth and spirit, and to contemplate face to face the more than most true, the more than most spiritual and superessential excellency of Thy Trinity and Unity.

TO THE HONOUR OF THE EVER BLESSED TRINITY;
THE WORD INCARNATE, AND HIS VIRGIN MOTHER;
ST. JOSEPH, AND ALL SAINTS.

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